LATER
OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVES

Thirty-six Lessons

BY

WILLIAM H. LYON

THIRD EDITION

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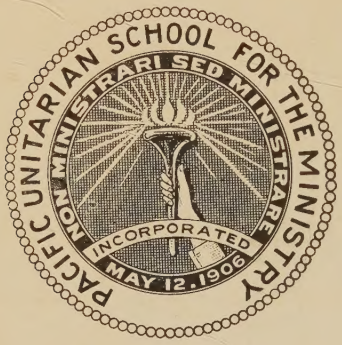

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PREFACE.

These lessons are intended to follow the "Early Old Testament Narratives," published in 1893. They have an advantage over those in not being obliged to keep step with a previous series, (admirable for its own purpose), covering the same ground, but touching it only at points suited for primary classes. They have the disadvantage of dealing, to a large extent, with less picturesque and romantic stories. The sober history of these later centuries, however, is not less important in the life of humanity than that of Greek and Roman days, which is considered so essential to the education of our children in other schools, and should be taught as conscientiously in the Sunday School, though it prove at times unattractive. The lessons are based on Professor Toy's admirable manual published in 1882 by the Unitarian Sunday-School Society. He has kindly revised the chronology for me in the light of more recent knowledge. Every teacher should have this little volume.

By far the best books of greater length are those of Professor Charles T. Kent, "The United Kingdom," "The Divided Kingdom," and "The Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Periods," and Professor Riggs' "The Maccabean and Roman Period." These little volumes are charmingly written, and adopt, unobtrusively but frankly, the well-established conclusions of the higher criticism. These conclusions will be found clearly stated in S. R. Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament." Professor Kent is now sending out a larger work in six volumes, of great value as illustrating the documentary origin of the earlier Old Testament.

Geikie's six volumes of "Hours with the Bible" are rich in "local color," though they ignore the recent results of scholarship. "The Bible for Learners" is as good as ever, the Old Test ment parts being now published in one volume; and Dean Stanley's fascinating "Lectures on the Jewish Church," though outlawed in forty years as to dates and authors, is still useful in drawing moral and religious lessons from the history. The admirable articles on Biblical subjects in the Encyclopædia Britannica remain helpful. The new Encyclopædia Biblica, edited by Canon Cheyne, gives the most progressive views;

while Hastings' "A Dictionary of the Bible," and the revised edition of Smith's, are more conservative.

Cornill's "The Prophets of Israel" is lively and stimulating, while those who care to go more deeply into that subject should read Professor W. Robertson Smith's "The Prophets of Israel" as well as his "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church." Professor H. P. Smith's "Old Testament History" covers the whole ground in one volume, taking a progressive but not extreme position. Renan's "History of the People of Israel," like all his Biblical work, is fascinating, but to be read with caution.

For fresh translation and rearrangement nothing is better than "Scriptures Hebrew and Christian," 3 vols., by Professors Bartlett and Peters. Noyes' translations of the prophets and some other books of the Old Testament are still serviceable. The dainty little volumes of Professor Moulton's "The Modern Reader's Bible" are of great value and convenience. Also excellent is the Century Company's handsome "The Bible for Children." Thomson's "The Land and the Book" and Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine" are still useful. A very scholarly atlas is that connected with G. A. Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," but very good and cheap are the S. P. C. K. Bible Atlas, Phillips' Scripture Atlas, and Eiler's Bible Atlas. For contemporary history read Breasted's "History of the Egyptians" and Goodspeed's "History of the Babylonians and Assyrians" in same series with Kent.

A useful commentary, in spite of its old-fashioned views, is the "Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges." More progressive are such volumes as G. A. Smith's "The Book of the Twelve Prophets," Canon Farrar's "The Minor Prophets," Cheyne on Isaiah and Jeremiah, Toy on Proverbs, etc. Epitomes of the prophets, psalms, etc. are given in the little "Messages of the Bible," by Sanders and others. For the Apocrypha consult Dr. Bissell's volume in Lange's Commentary. For the religious beliefs of this period see Davidson's "Theology of the Old Testament"; for the latter part of it, Toy's "Judaism and Christianity," Cheyne's "Jewish Religious Life after the Exile."

These books, or information concerning them, may be had of the Unitarian Sunday-School Society. Biblical scholarship is moving fast, and new books are continually appearing.

W. H. L.

BROOKLINE, August, 1904.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

HEBREW HISTORY.

B.C.	*History.*	*Literature.*
?2300		Egyptian Book of the Dead.
?1350	Settlement of some Hebrew tribes in Egypt.	
1250	Entrance into Canaan under Moses.	
1150–1050		Folk-poetry in Israel.
1050	Samuel.	
1030	Accession of Saul.	
1010	Accession of David.	Beginning of written records in Israel. Lyrical pieces.
970	Accession of Solomon.	
930	Division of the kingdom. Accession of Jeroboam of Israel and Rehoboam of Judah.	
900	Asa of Judah.	
880	Accession of Omri of Israel.	
854	Ahab of Israel.	
850	Jehoshaphat of Judah. Elijah.	
842	Overthrow of the Omri dynasty by Jehu. Prophet Elisha active. Athaliah usurps the throne of Judah.	First written collection of laws.
800		Yahwistic document (J) of the Pentateuch.
785	Accession of Jeroboam II of Israel.	
760–735		Prophets Amos and Hosea.
726 or 715	Accession of Hezekiah of Judah.	Prophets Isaiah and Micah.
721	Fall of the kingdom of Israel.	
697	Accession of Manasseh.	Various lyrical religious pieces. Elohistic document (E) of the Pentateuch.
639	Accession of Josiah	
630		Prophet Nahum.
621		Deuteronomy, Zephaniah
608	Battle of Megiddo and death of Josiah.	
606	Fall of Nineveh.	Habakkuk.
597	Deportation of Jews to Babylon.	Jeremiah, 626–580. Ezekiel, 593–570.
586	Fall of the kingdom of Judah.	
580		Obadiah. Lamentations.
560		Judges, Samuel, and Kings
540		Isaiah xl.–lv.
539	Capture of Babylon by Cyrus.	
536	Return of Jews to Canaan.	
521		Haggai, Zech. i.–viii.

B.C.	*History.*	*Literature.*
515	Completion of the second temple.	
457	First visit of Ezra to Jerusalem.	
444	Nehemiah governor of Judea. Ezra and Nehemiah introduce the nearly completed Law.	
?420		Malachi Ruth.
400		The Pentateuch receives substantially its final form. Job.
——	Samaritan temple built.	Isaiah lvi.–lxvi.
300		Zech. ix.–xiv., Joel
275		Septuagint begun.
250		Chronicles.
195	Onias III. high priest.	Ecclesiasticus.
170	Antiochus Epiphanes profanes the temple of Jerusalem.	
167	Revolt of the Jews.	
164	Judas Maccabæus purifies the temple. Institution of the Feast of Dedication.	Daniel.
150		Earliest part of Enoch.
130	John Hyrcanus I. destroys the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim.	Eccles., Psalms, and Proverbs completed. Song of Songs. I. Maccabees.
100		Esther.
70		Close of the Canon. Septuagint completed.
63	Pompey takes Jerusalem.	
40	Herod king of Judea.	Latest parts of Enoch.
17	Begins to rebuild the temple.	
4	Birth of Jesus.	
A.D.		
70	Destruction of Jerusalem.	
132	Messianic uprising under Barcokba.	
192		The Mishna.
200		Targum of Onkelos. Greek version of Old Testament by Aquila.
250		Targum of Jonathan.
350		Jerusalem Talmud.
490		Babylonian Talmud.
1036	Overthrow of the Babylonian Patriarchate.	
1204	Death of Maimonides.	
1492	Expulsion of Jews from Spain.	
1518		Bomberg's Rabbinical Bible.
1575	Death of Joseph Karo, the second Maimonides.	
1666	The pretended Messiah, Shabbathai Zwi, sets out on his march to Jerusalem.	
1786	Death of Moses Mendelssohn.	

LESSON I.

THE BEGINNING OF THE HUMAN RACE.

(Genesis i.–xi.)

Lesson Text.—God created man in his own image.—Genesis i. 27.

I. How the World began.

The Bible opens with the beginning of all things as the people of two or three thousand years ago understood it. So the first book of the Bible is called Genesis, or creation. First there was a great, shapeless quantity of matter in utter darkness. Then the spirit of God worked upon it, and in six days made light, the sky, the separation of land and sea, the grass, plants, and trees, the sun, moon, and stars, the fishes and the birds, and the animals and man. On the seventh day God rested.

II. How the Human Race began.

In the first account of the creation it was stated simply that men and women were made on the sixth day. Then comes a story which tries to give more particulars about the first man and woman. First God made a man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed His own breath into him, and made him live. Then He put him into a great park, or garden, which He had planted, and formed the birds and beasts out of the ground, and brought them to Adam to be named. Then He put Adam to sleep, and took out a rib and made a woman, to enjoy the garden with him.

III. How Sin and Sorrow began.

God meant Adam and Eve to live forever in this garden of Eden. But there was a beast called the serpent, which then went on four legs, like other beasts. He persuaded Eve to eat of the fruit of a tree which God had told them not to touch. She liked it, and induced Adam to eat some, too. Then God was angry, and came down from heaven to turn them out of the garden. So sin, pain, and death came into the world; and the human race, with all its labor and sorrow, had to live in the great, rough world outside.

IV. How Mankind Spread over the Earth.

1. *The First Children.* The very first was Cain, and then Abel was born. Cain grew up to be a farmer, and Abel became a raiser of stock,—cattle, sheep, and goats. They quarrelled over sacrifices, and Cain killed Abel. So came anger and murder into the world. Cain wandered off, and built the first city. His descendants became great inventors and manufacturers. From them came tents, musical instruments, and metallic tools and weapons. So what we call civilization began.

2. *Beginning over again.* So the world went on for many centuries. Then the angels, or sons of God, fell in love with the women of the earth; and their children were giants and mighty warriors. They grew fierce and wicked till at last God could not bear them any longer.

There was one family, Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives, whom God thought good enough to be saved. He told

Noah to build an ark, or house-boat, and to take into it his family and two (another account says seven) of each kind of birds and beasts.

Then a great rain came, and all the houses and even the mountains were covered as far as eye could see. So the water remained for nearly a year. Then it dried up, and the family of Noah and all the birds and beasts came out. So life began again upon the earth, and God hung out the rainbow to say that He would never drown the race again.

3. *How Languages came to Differ.* After many generations, men began to grow wicked again. They even began to build a great tower, so that they could climb into heaven, and conquer God himself. But God made them talk different languages, so that they could not understand each other. This put an end to their working together, and the tower of Babel was never finished. So men divided into races, according to their language; and so they remain to-day.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What does the word *Bible* mean? Does the word occur anywhere in the book? Does Genesis profess to be inspired by God? How far does its account of the creation agree with modern knowledge? Is it not wonderfully accurate, considering its date?

2. How far do the two accounts of the creation agree? Do you find any difference in their style? Is not the second more interesting? How do you account for two stories? Do you think the second fair to Eve? Is the tempted one as guilty as the tempter, if he yields?

3. What do you think of the account of the origin of pain and toil? Was Abel to blame in the quarrel with Cain? Is it true that "God made the country and man made the town"? Is civilization worse than barbarism?

4. Are there any signs of a universal deluge? Did men in those days know what took place far from them? What makes the rainbow? Does God not make things whose causes we know? What do you think of the origin of the difference in languages? Is it a good thing?

REFERENCES.

In Rev. A. W. Gould's "Beginnings" will be found many helpful facts and suggestions.

LESSON II.

THE BEGINNING OF ISRAEL.

(Genesis xii.-l., Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges.)

LESSON TEXT.— By faith Abraham . . . went out, not knowing whither he went.— HEBREWS xi. 8.

I. THE PATRIARCHS.

The Bible begins with the creation of the world, and for a while tells about the spread of the human race. Then suddenly it narrows down its story to the beginning of the people called at first "Hebrews," then "Israelites," then, as now, "Jews." With this people the rest of the Old Testament is concerned. The New Testament begins with them, but, following the development of the Christian religion, widens out again into the gospel which is for "all nations, . . . even unto the end of the world." So the Bible is at its end, as it was at its beginning, the history of the whole human race.

There was beyond the Euphrates a man named Abram, living in idolatry, who believed himself called by God to leave his country and his family, and journey south and west to the land known then as Canaan, later as Palestine. There Jehovah made himself known to him as the true God, and promised to make him the beginning of a great and blessed nation. He tested him by demanding that he should sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to Him, saving the boy just as he was about to be killed on the altar. After Abraham's death, Isaac became the head of the tribe, and after him his son Jacob, or Israel. These three are called the "Patriarchs" or ruling heads of the tribe. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom, named Joseph, was sold to gypsies, and carried to Egypt, where he became prime minister. In time famine drove Jacob to send some of his sons to Egypt to buy corn, and Joseph persuaded them to bring their father and the rest of his family to live with him. Then Jacob died, and a new era for Israel began.

II EGYPT AND THE EXODUS.

The family grew into a great people, whom the later Pharaohs, or kings of Egypt, made slaves. At last, a young man named Moses, who had fled over the isthmus to Midian, and there had learned much from a priest called Jethro, resolved to free his people, and, after many strange adventures, led them across the isthmus to the peninsula of Sinai.

There he announced that Jehovah had given him on the mountain ten commandments and several other rules which grew afterwards into a great body of statutes called the "Law." Then he tried to lead them up to conquer the land from which they came, Canaan, now filled with warlike tribes; but they had been slaves too long, and he had to let them wander in the wilderness till a new generation, harder and braver, had been trained by his wisdom and the new kind of life. He also died before the destiny of his people had been realized, but he saw the Promised Land from the top of a high mountain.

Then Joshua took command, and led Israel northward to the conquest of a new home. He was a man of war, and his victories were without mercy. The inhabitants were mostly slaughtered as

fast as they were conquered, and Israel took possession of their empty houses and cities. At last Canaan was subjugated, and divided among the twelve tribes, mostly between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, but partly on the other side of the river toward the north.

The tribe of Levi was reserved to be the priests of the nation; but the two sons of Joseph took their father's place, and kept the original number of twelve. So the great plan of Moses was at last carried out. Unhappily, the tribes were scattered over too great a territory to keep united; and the farming and pastoral life made them less warlike. The remnants of the fierce native tribes of the land grew stronger, and finally became almost their masters. In some places they took their arms from them. It seemed as if the hope of Moses had failed, and the nation was as helpless as when it wandered in the wilderness.

III. The Judges.

The nation was saved, however, by valiant men who here and there rose and led some tribe or group of tribes to victory against their oppressors. These leaders came to be called the "Judges." The most famous of these were a woman named Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel. The last was a very powerful and wise man. He brought the tribes together, encouraged schools of prophets, and laid the foundation for the future might and splendor of Israel. He was the last of the Judges, because, when the nation had grown more solid, it felt the need of a more permanent and established government.

Much against his will, therefore, Samuel complied with the national desire for a king, and himself selected the first of the royal line. He did not mean to found a dynasty, because he believed that Jehovah would in every case choose, by some sign, him who was a good man for the position. To Samuel the real king was always to be God.

Topics and Questions.

1. A patriarch is a father-ruler. The tribe is a great family. Should not every king be the father of his people? Has it always been so? Name the patriarchs. How do you think that Abram was called? Are men still called to great duties in the same way? To small duties, too? Are there any traces of the Israelites in Egypt?

2. Do you think that the Israelites had a good training in the wilderness? Why was it better than their life in Egypt? What effect does slavery have upon men? Freedom? What do you think of the custom of killing captives? Was there any justification in these cases? Why should success have made the tribes less warlike?

3. What are the best known stories of the Judges? What was the advantage of kings? What is meant by "the divine right of kings"? Is there a "divine right" of presidents? What is meant by "Vox populi, vox Dei"? Can you trace a divine guidance in the history of Israel so far?

LESSON III.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ISRAEL.

(1 Samuel viii.–1 Kings xi.)

LESSON TEXT.— Whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant. — MATTHEW xx. 27.

The Three Kings.

I. SAUL.

After long resistance and argument against a royal form of government, Samuel at last yielded. The man whom he chose was named Saul, a tall, handsome young man, well fitted both to impress his own people, and to lead them in person against their enemies. He proved to be a brave, bluff, generous soldier, loyal to Jehovah and hostile to all idolatry. The royal power justified what was expected of it. The tribes fought well together under a king; and the Philistines, the chief enemies of Israel at that time, were steadily forced back. Unfortunately, Saul was afflicted with attacks of mania and depression, under which he became suspicious and furious. His reign, however, was a successful one, on the whole, though he suffered a great defeat by the Philistines at Mount Gilboa, where he was killed. He had made the work of his successor easier.

II. DAVID.

Saul had become acquainted with his successor long before he died. During one of his insane turns a young shepherd who played the harp was brought in to soothe him. Later the same young man had a famous duel with Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, slaying him and putting his army to flight. He had also been the intimate friend of Saul's son, Jonathan, and had made himself a great reputation as a warrior, to Saul's great jealousy.

This man Samuel anointed king, and again the new policy was justified. David was a valiant warrior, a warm-hearted and generous friend, capable of much chivalry and loyalty, a poet and musician according to his day, and a religious man, true always to Jehovah. He completed the conquest of the Philistines, and turned his arms against the fierce tribes on the other side of Jordan, carrying victory even to the Euphrates River. On the north he became an ally of the Phœnicians. So he became the founder of one of the mightiest empires of his day.

Of his chivalry some fine stories are told, as that of sparing Saul in the cave and that of refusing to drink the water which his heroes had endangered their lives to get for him. David composed a eulogy on Saul and Jonathan at their death which seemed to justify attributing the Psalms to him; but it is now believed that they came from many hands through many centuries. He turned away from the idolatry which was creeping in from the nations around Israel, and would have built a temple to Jehovah, but that he feared that so bloody a man of war ought not to do so sacred an act. He built a palace, however, on the hill city which he had captured and called Jerusalem, and which was ever after the capital of the nation. He was a man of his time, in many respects, cruel, sensual, and, in one notable instance, mean,

but above these occasional outbreaks from beneath towered an heroic and high-minded king.

III. SOLOMON.

The accession of Solomon, about 1000 B.C., is a good landmark in the history of Israel. He was a very different man from his father. David was a hard fighter and a winner of territory. Solomon was no warrior,—in fact, was not called upon to fight. But he developed his inherited empire in peaceful ways, allied it with other nations, enriched it with commerce and cultivated it with literature, art, and philosophy. He lived in most royal style. The splendor of his court was ever after famous in the traditions of Israel. The number of his wives, most of them from foreign lands, was incredible. He built the first temple with a magnificence which would have been wonderful even in far later days. The ritual observed in it, with great choirs and orchestras and hosts of priests, was probably not surpassed for pomp and beauty in the world of its day.

He himself was celebrated far and wide for his wisdom. The Queen of Sheba came to talk with him, and he was said to have composed thousands of proverbs and to have great knowledge of all things in nature. The Books of Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes attributed to him, though they were probably not written by him, attest the admiration which after ages had for his literary and philosophical ability.

The beautiful story of the choice which he made in his dream shows how earnest was the spirit in which he was believed to have entered upon his royal duties, but the temptations of his splendid position seem to have led him astray. There was something of the spoiled child about him. He perversely loaded down the northern part of his kingdom with taxation, and alienated the more serious element among his people with his unfaithfulness to Jehovah, and his toleration of the idolatrous and often sensual religions of his foreign wives. His kingdom was great while he lived, but he left the seeds of dissension and disunion in it to ripen after he was gone.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What are the advantages of a monarchy? The dangers? What kind of a king did Saul make? Why did Samuel choose a tall man for a king? Do the kings of to-day need to be muscular?

2. What do you think of David as a king? Does he seem likely to have written the Psalms? Did he not feel himself that he was too bloody a man to please Jehovah? Tell the stories of his chivalry. Was it not above the habit of his day?

3. For what do you praise Solomon most? Is it common for men to fall away from their youthful ideals? What kind of wisdom, then, had he? Can a man be bright of mind and bad of heart? Strong in thought and weak of will?

LESSON IV.

ISRAEL AND ITS ENEMIES.

LESSON TEXT.— Fear thou not, for I am with thee, . . . I am thy God.— ISAIAH xli. 10.

THIS is to be a lesson in geography, for we shall need to know what is meant by the names of countries which we shall often meet henceforth. Let us study the map carefully.

I. THE KINGDOM UNDER SOLOMON.

Israel, just before the division into Israel and Judah, was one of the most powerful nations in the world. It extended to the north as far as Hamath. It touched the Euphrates at Tiphsah. It had a post at Tadmor on the edge of the great Syrian desert. David had conquered Damascus, the capital of Syria; and, though he did not hold it long, it was at this time very formidable. Phœnicia, whose chief cities were Tyre and Sidon, was independent in its narrow strip of land between the mountains and the sea. But Hiram, king of Tyre, was a friend of Solomon, and helped him build the temple. Farther south Israel extended to the Mediterranean, its old enemies, the Philistines, having been subdued by David. Egypt was friendly, the daughter of the Pharaoh having married Solomon. By its influence Solomon obtained a seaport, Elath, at the head of the Gulf of Akabah, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. On the east, beyond Jordan, Israel extended to the great desert.

Internally, the division into the twelve tribes continued. Beginning at the north, first came Naphtali, then Issachar, then Manasseh, which extended far across the Jordan, Ephraim (in Jesus' time called Samaria), Dan, Benjamin (containing Jerusalem), Judah, and Simeon. On the other side of the Dead Sea were Reuben; north of this Gad; and, farther north, part of Manasseh. Of the original twelve tribes, Levi had for some reason been scattered through the rest, and later was assigned to the priesthood, and Joseph had been divided into Manasseh and Ephraim.

II. THE ENEMIES OF ISRAEL.

Since we are to see Israel decline henceforth, we ought to know who the nations are that are to bring her misfortune.

Syria lay immediately on the north and east, shutting Israel in to the coast. Its chief city was Damascus, famous for its splendor in general and for its cloth and steel ("Damask" and "Damascus blades"). We shall hear much of the Syrians soon both in war and in religion. They worshipped the powers of nature under the form of male deities called Baalim, or the Baals, and female, called Ashtaroth, or the Ashtoreths, Asheras, or Astartes. The worship of these last was often very foul, and the prophets were justified in hating it.

The Assyrians and Babylonians lay still farther east, beyond Syria. They are named together because they were, for most of the time during which we are to study them, united, sometimes the one nation, sometimes the other being master. Babylonia lay between the lower parts of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and Chaldea crossed the united stream farther south.

Babylonia had a very rich soil, and became civilized very early. Here the Garden of Eden was supposed to have been. The Babylonians were fond of astronomy. They mapped out the heavens and numbered the stars, divided the year into months

and the months into weeks, with Sabbaths. They had minutes and seconds, though twice as long as ours, invented the clepsydra, or water-clock, and the dial. In art they were skilled in cutting gems, in the very common, if not the earliest use of the column, and of colors in architecture.

The Assyrians dwelt to the north and east in a hilly country, and were a more robust and warlike people. They were less inventive and quick of mind, but adopted much from the Babylonians. Their bas-reliefs were very striking and often grand. Both countries had great libraries of brick tablets. From the Assyrians came Israel's worst troubles and her final ruin.

The Medes and Persians will not concern us until late in the Exile, but this is a good time to speak of them. Media lay east of Assyria, and south of it was Persia. The Babylonians and Assyrians were of the Semitic family of nations, like the Hebrews, Arabians, and Phœnicians. Media and Persia were overrun by tribes of the Aryan stock, of which most Europeans come. They conquered the Babylonian Empire under Cyrus and Darius (523 B.C.)

III. Israel's Dangerous Position.

If we look at the map again, we shall see how difficult it was likely to be for Israel to remain independent. On one side was the ancient and powerful kingdom of Egypt, well protected by desert and sea, very fertile and populous. On the north and east were the nations we have named, growing very strong. Between these new nations and Egypt there was sure to be war sooner or later, and then little Israel would lie directly on the road between them. Whichever won or lost, Israel was very certain to be trodden under foot.

At the same time, though she lay along the end of a great sea, she had no good ports, since her own coast allowed but poor harbors. Her commerce had to be through Tyre on the north and Elath on the south, both in the territory of other nations. Through Tyre she reached as far as Tarshish in Spain, and, through Elath, the rich coasts of Arabia and possibly of India, but only when she was at peace with the countries through which her caravans must pass.

Topics and Questions.

1. Was Israel in itself a large or a small nation? Have the nations which have had the greatest influence on history been large or small? Have they been on the seacoast or in the interior? Of what shape was Palestine?

2. What do you know about Phœnicia? Tyre? Sidon? Describe the relative situation of Syria, Babylonia, Assyria. Where was Ur of the Chaldees, from which Abram came? Have you ever seen pictures of the bas-reliefs of Assyria, the tall kings, the bulls and lions? Where were Media and Persia? What do you know about Egypt?

References.

Kent, "United Kingdom," 18-26. Stanley, "Sinai and Palestine." "Jewish Church," II., Lecture XXVI. G. A. Smith, "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land." Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, "Bible Atlas." Bible Dictionaries, Smith, Hastings, Cheyne, *Syria*, *Assyria*, etc.

LESSON V.

THE NEW ISRAEL.

(1 Kings xii. 1–20, 25–33; xiii.; Exodus xxxii.)

LESSON TEXT.—Shall two walk together except they have agreed?—AMOS iii. 3.

I. THE SECESSION.

We have learned in an earlier book of the rebellion of Israel against Judah, how the nine northern tribes and most of Benjamin separated from Judah, Simeon, and the rest of Benjamin. Henceforth the name "Israel" must be used only of this northern part of the nation which once bore this name as a whole. The two sections were never reunited, though they sometimes were allied against a common foe.

II. ISRAEL.

Of the two parts Israel was much the larger. It had about 9,400 square miles, about as many as New Hampshire has, while Judah had 3,600, a little more than Rhode Island and Delaware have together. It was also much richer. Judah was hilly and rocky, and Simeon consisted of poor, upland pastures, while Israel had the fertile district afterwards called Galilee, the rich plain of Esdraelon, and the woods and green fields across the Jordan. But Israel had to organize itself out of people that had looked to Jerusalem for leadership; while Judah kept not only the capital, but all the organization of church and state, and all the traditions and prestige of the kingdom. Israel soon became divided and factious; while Judah kept united, and, though weaker, lasted a century longer.

III. THE SECEDERS' GOVERNMENT.

Jeroboam, who became the first king of the new Israel, was a native of Ephraim, "a mighty man of valor," whom Solomon, "seeing that he was industrious, made ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph,"—*i.e.*, overseer of the share of the tribe of Ephraim in the public works of the nation. The prophet Ahijah foretold that he should rule over ten of the tribes, and Solomon, hearing of it, was so enraged that Jeroboam fled to Egypt. On the death of Solomon he returned, and Israel looked to him as its natural head. He chose Shechem for his capital, and fortified it strongly, but changed to Tirza, where he built a city which rivalled Jerusalem in splendor and strength. In later reigns, Samaria became the capital.

IV. THE SECEDERS' CHURCH.

In ancient times religion was established and supported by the government, as it still is in many countries of Europe. Jeroboam soon had this to care for. He saw that it would not do to have his people going to the Temple at Jerusalem for their worship. He therefore selected two towns where ancient sanctuaries were, Dan, at the extreme north of his kingdom, and Bethel, at the extreme south. Here he set up golden calves, not as idols, but as symbols of Jehovah, and organized, especially at Bethel, a splendid ritual worship, like that at Jerusalem. The result of this was that the priests left him, and went to Jerusalem.

They were the representatives not only of religion, but of education and refinement; and the loss of them was a heavy blow. New ones, however, took their places; and the two sanctuaries became very popular. "High places" also were allowed; that is, subordinate altars on elevated points. These were originally connected with sun-worship, but their purpose now was to make the worship of Jehovah more convenient.

These arrangements of Jeroboam, though sincere, led to much error and harm among the common people. The calves became to them idols. Still worse, as the idea had come from the Canaanites, among whom the calves were symbols of Baal and of Astarte, the Syrian Venus, it could not but bring with them the old religion. The same was true of the "high places." The result was that Israel slid fast away from the worship of Jehovah into that of heathen gods and goddesses, with the abominations which were practised in their name. Hence we shall find the prophets, as they arise, waxing hot against the new religion. The breach with Judah, of course, grew wider.

. The House of Jeroboam.

The king himself was a strong character, and held the new kingdom firmly together for twenty-two years. His son Nadab, however, was not like him, and reigned but two years. Then he was assassinated by Baasha, who also put to death the rest of Jeroboam's family. This king reigned twenty-four years, and left a son, Elah, to be soon murdered, with all his kin, by one of his officers, Zimri, who, in his turn, after only a week of power, was forced to suicide by a revolution under another officer, Omri. So the usurper Jeroboam had set an example of usurpation for those who came after him, and the kingdom became the prey of the strongest. The foreign conquests of David had meantime become independent again, and Israel and Judah were reduced to their own tribes alone.

Topics and Questions.

1. What were the reasons for the division?
2. On which side are your sympathies? Why?
3. In what does this secession differ from that of the Southern States of our own country?
4. Do you think that Jeroboam was justified in becoming a king?
5. What is the danger of having images of divine beings? What is the result in Catholic churches of having images of Jesus, Mary, and the saints?
6. Have we an established church in this country? Why?

References.

A fine chapter in Geikie, II. 1-35. Also in Stanley, II. 291-310. Bible for Learners, III., Ch. IX. Kent, "Divided Kingdom," 1-54.

LESSON VI.

AHAB AND JEZEBEL.

(See Bible references below.)

LESSON TEXT.— Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off. — 1 KINGS xx. 11.

I. AHAB I. (KINGS xvi. 29–33).

There are not many kings of Israel that deserve more than mention. It is the prophets who were the greater men. Elijah and Elisha have been described in an earlier book; but Ahab and his queen, then only incidentally treated, merit a chapter by themselves. Ahab (903 B.C.), the son of Omri, the head of the army, was a valiant soldier and a successful general, though in other respects not a strong character. He married, however, a woman of indomitable will and fierce temper (xxi. 1–19), named Jezebel. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. She was not only a foreigner and of Israel's old enemy, the Caananitish stock, but, as both her name and her father's implied, a worshipper of Baal. From this sprang, as we shall see, much trouble.

II. BAAL.

Ahab's father had made Samaria his capital, and had built there a splendid city. Ahab now built another at Jezreel, in Issachar, still more splendid, partly of ivory. Here he established a great sanctuary for Ashtoreth, the Venus of the Sidonians, in which the abominable practices connected with her worship were held. Four hundred prophets here fed at Jezebel's table. At Samaria he built a grand temple to Baal, with 450 prophets in attendance. Jezebel then began a thorough persecution of the worship of the Jehovah, so that Elijah (v. 14) complained that he was the only one left. It was the establishment of Baal and his consort as the gods of Israel that called out this robust and picturesque prophet, about whom, if you have time, you had better read again, especially in chapters xviii. and xix. The characters of Ahab and Jezebel come out plainly in the contest with him.

III. THE SYRIANS (xx. 1–21).

Damascus was the chief city of the union of tribes known as Syria, and Ben-hadad was its king. He was a very successful general, and had already driven back the king of Assyria. He now made an assault upon Israel with a great army. Flushed with victory, he sent insolent demands to Ahab, which were timidly granted. But, when the Syrian demanded practically everything else, Ahab stood firm. To the boasts of Ben-hadad he simply answered that time would show what he could do, and that he who was putting on his armor should not talk as if he had already won his victory and were taking his armor off. Then, while the Syrian commanders were carousing, he attacked their army and drove it back with great slaughter.

IV. THE BATTLE ON THE PLAIN (xx. 22–30).

The beaten are very apt to think of good reasons for their defeat, and the courtiers of Ben-hadad persuaded him that he had been conquered because the God of the Israelites was a God of

the hills, and that, if the king could only get them out on the plain or in some valley, where Jehovah had no power, he could defeat them easily. This idea of God's having power in certain places, but yielding to others elsewhere, we have seen to be very common in those days. Ben-hadad therefore lured the Israelites to Aphek, the situation of which is not exactly known, but it must have been in some low or level place, and was beaten worse than before.

V. The Arrow at a Venture (xxii. 29–38).

One more battle with the Syrians had Ahab, and it was his last. He proposed to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to get back Ramoth of Gilead, a city in Gad, which the father of Ben-hadad had taken from the father of Ahab. Jehoshaphat agreed; but Ahab, knowing that he would be a marked man, disguised himself for the battle. The Syrian king had made up his mind to kill Ahab this time surely, and had told his captains not to fight with any one but the king of Israel. Naturally, they attacked the only king whom they could see; but Jehoshaphat, understanding the situation and, perhaps, not unwilling that Ahab should be punished for getting him into such danger, let them know who he was. The captains were not able to find Ahab; but "a certain man drew his bow at a venture," and the arrow struck Ahab in a vital part. He held out for the rest of the day, but at sunset he died,—not a very glorious end.

VI. The Death of Jezebel (2 Kings ix. 30–37).

Ahab's queen lived many years after him, but came at last to a violent death. Jehu, the king at that time, in the course of his attempt to slay all the house of Omri, came to the palace at Jezreel. Jezebel knew what he had come for, but she faced him without fear. She dressed herself in her best, came to the window, and taunted him with being like Zimri, who destroyed the family of king Baasha and reigned only seven days before he killed himself. Jehu ordered the court-officers to throw her down, and his horses trampled her to death. Her name has come down to us as signifying an ill-tempered and violent woman; but she was a brave one, and it may be that religious hatred has done her wrong.

Topics and Questions.

1. What do you think of Ahab? Of Jezebel? Are people of different religions or sects apt to speak justly of each other? Ought we to make allowances in these cases?
2. The story of Frederick the Great and the mill-owner at his gate.
3. The Eastern story of the man who went far away to escape the angel of death, but found that that was the very place to which the angel had been sent at first. Is there such a thing as fate?

References.

Kent, "Divided Kingdom," 35-54. Stanley, II., Lecture XXX. Geikie, III., Ch. IV. Bible for Learners, III., Ch. X. Cornill, 27-37. W. R. Smith, Lecture II.

LESSON VII.

BEFORE THE BIBLE BEGAN.

Lesson Text.—The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.—2 Cor. iii. 6.

I. The Many Gods.

You must have been surprised that Ahab should erect altars and temples to Baal. The early books of the Old Testament, called the Pentateuch, expressly ordain that there should be only one God, Jehovah. The first of the ten Commandments is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"; and the second is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, . . . for I, Jehovah, thy God am a jealous God." Yet Jeroboam had not hesitated to set up golden calves as symbols of Jehovah. Even Solomon, who had that beautiful dream of wisdom from God, and who built a splendid temple to him, "went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after" Milcom and Khemosh and Moloch, gods of other nations (1 Kings xi. 1–13). Besides, we are continually told that one king prospered because he worshipped Jehovah and another suffered because he followed other gods. Does it not seem strange that even kings should follow other gods if they had these plain commandments against doing so?

II. A Religion without Books.

The reason is that these books to which we have referred were not yet written. *No book now in our Old Testament was written at this time*, nor for over a hundred years to come; not even the Ten Commandments existed. The first of the present books was the prophecy of Amos, as we shall see. But no *book of laws* was compiled until about 750 B.C., nearly a generation after Amos. Then some one collected a number of laws that had been made from time to time. It is believed that these are the laws still preserved in Exodus xxi., xxii., xxiii. 1–19. You must read these. You will see how just they are, and often how tender. They seem to have been made for people who have much to do with cattle, so that some of them may be very ancient.

But there is almost nothing about religion in them. It was not until over a hundred years later than this—*i.e.*, this side of 650 B.C.—that the first book of laws which we still have was made (Deuteronomy), and not until over three hundred years later that the Pentateuch was completed. In Ahab's time, therefore, not a book of our Old Testament was in existence. The people were governed by the judges and kings, by the priests of the sanctuary, or by the elders of the cities.

III. The Divided Worship.

Though Jehovah was looked upon as Israel's God, its protector and champion, yet there were reasons why other gods would also have a part in the worship. The Israelites, after all, were newcomers to the land. The people they had conquered were the original inhabitants. Their gods, therefore, were, according to the ideas of that time, the gods of that part of the earth. Israel had not yet arrived at the belief that there was but one God who ruled the whole earth. These native gods, then, might still have power. It might still be they who made the soil fertile or brought

the sunshine and the storm. It would do no harm to keep their favor.

Then, as the kings married wives from other countries (for this was not yet forbidden), these queens would naturally wish to bring their gods with them and have proper altars and temples for them, just as the Russians often have Greek churches where their ambassadors reside. Again, the religion of Jehovah was a rather stern and joyless one, though pure, and these foreign gods had a worship which, though often foul and abominable, was showy and agreeable. Hence the Baals, Ashtoreths, and the rest easily found favor with the less serious and thoughtful people in Israel.

IV. How the Books Came to be Written.

The friends of Jehovah, however, saw that they must save His worship from being at the mercy of this king or that. The only way was to have laws written, so that they should be permanent and could be appealed to in any case of doubt or rebellion. More than this, they must have the authority of some great name which should be stronger than the whims of kings or people. The greatest name in Hebrew history was that of Moses. It was he who made Jehovah the God of the Hebrews, and brought them, under his protection, out of bondage. So, henceforth, the laws which were written in support of Jehovah-worship, since they were the outgrowth of the seed which he planted, were called "the laws of Moses." So arose the last four books of our Pentateuch.

V. The Writing of History

The books of history, as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, were all written after this time and in consequence of the great struggle to make Jehovah the only God of the Hebrews. Hence they were written with the same purpose as the laws. The success or defeat of the people or of their kings was attributed to their obedience or disobedience of Jehovah. So came the historical books, long after the events they narrate had happened. Now we understand how it is that the kings and the people, at this time and much later, acted as if they had never heard of these laws. They never had, for the laws had not yet been written.

Topics and Questions.

1. What was the ancient idea about the power of the gods? What do we believe about God? Do we think that God has no power in Europe? Did you ever feel, in a cathedral there, as if the worship was to a different god from yours? Do you think that the different religions in Israel seem very much as different sects seem to us?

2. Was it customary in ancient times to write books in great men's names? Why was it done? What do you think of it? If you thought that a certain man would have believed as you do, if he had lived to see what you see, would you think it right to put his name to a book which you wrote? Were any books in the New Testament so written? What theories are there about the Fourth Gospel, Hebrews, Philippians?

3. Which came first, religion or the Bible? If the Bible should disappear, would religion continue? Would another Bible come out of it? Has any inspired literature been written since the Bible? What is inspiration? What books make you feel best?

References.

Bible for Learners, III., Ch. XVI. Enc. Bib., *Decalogue* and *Exodus*. Kent, "Divided Kingdom," 158-164. Toy, 51, 65-103.

LESSON VIII.

THREE STRANGE BATTLES.

LESSON TEXT.— Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them.— 2 KINGS vi. 16.

I. A STRANGE DEFEAT (2 KINGS iii.).

Ahab was succeeded by Ahaziah, who lived but two years, and then, dying without children, was followed by his brother Jehoram. This king made war upon Mesha, king of Moab, who had refused to continue tribute to Israel. Jehosaphat of Judah, who seems to have been as willing to ally with Jehoram as with Ahab, and the king of Edom joined him. Moab was the country just east of the Dead Sea, and Edom stretched far to the south of it. An unexpected drought, however, deprived the army and its cattle of water. Jehoram fell into despair, but Jehosaphat called for a prophet.

Now Elisha happened to be with the army of Israel; and, though he would do nothing for a Baal-worshipper like Jehoram, he was willing to help the loyal Jehosaphat. He demanded a harper, and, under the influence of music, prophesied that, if the army would dig trenches, they would be filled with water in the night. So they were, whether by some rain or by springs we cannot know now; and all was well with the allies.

The results were, the Moabites, seeing the red reflection of the sun, and not knowing that there was any water there, thought it must be blood shed in some quarrel between the allies. They rushed carelessly down upon them, but were beaten, and their land and cities ruined. Mesha took refuge in his capital, and made several vain attempts to break through the besiegers. At last, believing Chemosh, his god, to be angry with him, he sacrificed his eldest son upon the walls, in sight of the enemy. The record says that "there was great indignation against Israel, and they departed from him, and returned to their own land." This seems to mean that the sacrifice so roused the Moabites, who believed that they were sure to win, now that Chemosh must be with them, that they drove the allies off with a fury of religious faith. Others think that it was dismay or superstitious fear that drove the allies home.

II. THE INVISIBLE ALLIES (2 KINGS vi. 8–23).

This is one of the strange stories told of Elisha. The king of Syria, who was at war with Israel, found that he could not propose to camp anywhere without his enemy knowing of it and escaping. He suspected a traitor in his own army, but was told that Elisha, the prophet, had some way of finding out these things and telling his king. So he ordered a spy to learn where he was, and sent a large force to surround Dothan, where he was found to be sleeping one night. When Elisha's servant rose the next morning, he saw that the city was surrounded. "What shall we do?" he cried to his master, in a panic. But Elisha replied quietly, "Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them." Then he prayed that his spiritual vision might be opened; and he saw the hill on which Dothan stood full of horses and chariots of fire. Again the prophet prayed, and the enemy was smitten with blindness. Then he led them right

into Samaria before they knew it. There they were taken prisoners, and the war was over.

III. A Strange Victory (2 Kings vi. 24–33; vii.).

Again Ben-hadad besieged Samaria. The city was in famine. The most revolting things were eaten, even, in one case, a child. When King Jehoram heard of this, it seemed that he could bear no more. He rent his clothes in token of grief, and people saw that he was wearing sackcloth next his skin in repentance for his sins. Still, he lays it all upon Elisha, for not saving him somehow. He sent a messenger to take off his head, and he himself in his fury followed close after him. Elisha met him calmly, though knowing his errand, and prophesied that there would be food enough the next day.

What Elisha had in mind we may not know, but his prediction came true in a very singular way. Four lepers were just outside the city gates, for even in war time they were not allowed to come in. They reasoned that they should die where they were, and that there was a chance for life among the Syrians. So they stole down to their camp; but, to their amazement, it was empty. The Syrians had heard strange noises, and fancied that great allies had come to the Israelites. A panic seized them. They fled, and the hungry lepers found everything at their mercy.

That night was a glorious one for them. In the morning they went back and told the gate-keeper. The king, however, would not believe that the Syrians had fled. He suspected a trap. Two chariots were sent out to reconnoitre. The lepers were found to have told the truth, and all the famine-stricken inhabitants flocked out and filled themselves with the spoil.

Topics and Questions.

1. What is the theory of sacrifice? What power was supposed to be in human sacrifices? What relation does Abram's plan to sacrifice Isaac have to this story? Did the Israelites believe that Chemosh was a real god?

2. What lesson can we gather from the young man's vision? Are there not always forces on the side of the right which the thoughtless cannot see? Is faith a kind of sight?

3. What do you know of lepers? Have you ever heard of Father Damien? What is panic? Do you know of any instance of it? What battles have been ended by it? Look up the derivation of the word.

References.

Geikie, III. p. 139. "Bible for Learners," Book III., Ch. XIII. Stanley, II., Lecture XXXI. Bible Dictionaries on Elisha.

LESSON IX.

THE DYING GLORY OF ISRAEL.

LESSON TEXT.—Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,—AMOS vi. 1.

The names of Jehoram, Jehu, Jeroboam, and many others begin with JE, because the name of Jehovah, their God, is part of them. Many names end in *iah* or *jah* for the same reason. It was common for the names of the members of a tribe to include the name of its god, as Ethbaal, Hannibal, Jezebel, etc., to show that the persons so called were worshippers of Baal.

I. JEHU (2 KINGS ix. 14–x. 36).

Jehoram has not seemed a very strong character; but Jehu and Jeroboam II. were both men of might, though Jehu was a bloody man in carrying out his plans. The fire often blazes up just before it dies out. So Israel was never prouder or stronger than just before its fall. Long ago (1 Kings xix. 16) when Elijah, in the cave of Horeb, took courage and formed new plans, he made up his mind that Jehu, the son of Nimshi, should be king over Israel, partly because he was a strong man, but chiefly because he was a champion of Jehovah. Somehow, Elijah did not carry out this design, nor did Elisha till many years had passed. Then he called one of the prophets, and sent him with a box of oil to anoint Jehu king, though Jehoram was still on the throne. The prophet did so, and Jehu started out on one of the most bloody courses known in history.

Jehoram was in the palace at Jezreel, recovering from wounds received in one of his many wars with Syria. Thither went Jehu in a chariot. Now Jehu was famous for his mad driving; and, when the watchman saw him coming across the plain, he said to the king, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu" (whence our saying still, "He drives like Jehu"). Then Jehoram, who was very fond of his general, went out to meet him with Ahaziah, king of Judah, who had come to visit him in his sickness. But Jehu answered his greeting so roughly that Jehoram cried out, "Treachery, Ahaziah!" and turned his chariot to escape, but an arrow from Jehu's bow killed him. Ahaziah fled; but he was a grandson of Ahab, and was overtaken and killed also. Then Jezebel, as we have seen, was put to death.

Nothing would satisfy the usurper, however, but the complete extinction of the house of Omri. Seventy sons of Ahab were at Samaria. These Jehu caused to be killed, and their heads were brought to him in baskets. To these were added all Ahab's kinsfolk, chief officers, and priests at Jezreel. Such massacres are not uncommon in the East. The safety of the usurper lies in leaving alive no legal claimant to the throne.

The next move of Jehu was more creditable in its motive, though quite as bloody in its execution. He called together all the worshippers of Baal, as if he were their friend, and gave them vestments to put on. Then they were asked to be sure that no worshippers of Jehovah were among them. Then they were all slaughtered in the great temple, which was itself pulled down, and all trace of Baal-worship destroyed. It never gained foothold in Israel again. For this we must thank Elijah and Elisha,

though they worked with a rough instrument. The golden calves at Bethel and Dan, however, remained. After a reign of twenty-eight years, Jehu died (841–813 B.C.).

II. JEROBOAM II.

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, had a hard time with the Syrians; but his son, Jehoash (2 Kings xiii. 10; xiv. 16), proved himself one of Israel's most valiant kings. He not only drove back the second Ben-hadad, but accepted a challenge of Amaziah, king of Judah, beat him, made him a vassal, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem, which had been thought impregnable. This glorious work his son Jeroboam II. carried further in his long reign of forty-one years (784–743 B.C.) The writer of the books of Kings is not very friendly to Jeroboam, because he kept up the calf-worship, and makes the story of his reign very short. This greatest of the kings of Israel recovered Hamath on the north, and Damascus on the east, and much of the land beyond Jordan down to the Dead Sea from the Syrians. He also kept control over Judah and the port of Elath on the Red Sea. So the kingdom of Israel at this time was as great as the undivided kingdom was under Solomon.

III. SIGNS OF DECAY AND DANGER.

All this military glory meant prosperity, for the spoils of war were great. Prosperity meant luxury, and from luxury came immorality of many kinds. The heathen religions crept back, and no notice was taken by the authorities of altars and practices supposed to have been banished forever. Moreover, though the Syrians were conquered, a far more terrible enemy began to be seen behind them. It is now that we begin to hear more of the Assyrians, who, within twenty-five years from Jeroboam's death, were to overrun the land and carry its people into exile. These things the prophets of Jehovah saw. They found in the Assyrians Jehovah's instruments to punish Israel for its wickedness and idolatry. In this reign rose two great champions of Jehovah,—Amos and Hosea.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What do you think of Jehu? Was he justified in all he did, if he was sincere in his devotion to Jehovah? What do you think of persecution for religion's sake? Was Jehu justified in his trick on the worshippers of Baal?

2. Trace on the map the borders of Israel under Jeroboam II. Where was Syria? Assyria? Do you think that the coming of the Assyrian was a punishment for Israel's idolatry and corruption? How are such things punished? What cases in history can you recall in which prosperity led to ruin? Think over the history of Israel since its secession.

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Toy, Lesson IX. Kent, "Divided Kingdom," 61-77. Geikie, III., Ch. VI. and VII., to p. 203. "Bible for Learners," Book III., Ch. XI., XVII. W. R. Smith, 90-122. Stanley, Lecture XXXII. and XXXIII.

LESSON X.

THE PROPHETS.

Lesson Text.— How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow Him.— 1 Kings xviii. 21.

I. The Meaning of the Word.

The word "prophet" is commonly supposed to mean one who foretells. Prophets did sometimes foretell; but, as we shall see, that was not the chief thing that they did. And they must not be judged by the fact that their predictions did or did not always prove to be true. The word "prophet" means one who *speaks for* another,—a spokesman. A religious prophet is one who speaks for his god, one who represents god among men, and tells them what he wishes them to do or not to do; that is, he is a preacher.

II. Different Kinds of Prophets.

We must not think that the only prophets are those we read of in the Bible or those that were among the Israelites They were found in many nations in ancient times. The Greeks had some. There was a prophetess at Delphi in the temple of Apollo. When she was consulted, she leaned over a crack in the ground, where a certain kind of gas poured up; and, when she had breathed this for some time, she began to make strange exclamations and other sounds, which those who believed in her supposed to be the answer of Apollo to their questions. This was called the *oracle* of Delphi.

Then there were prophets in great numbers in the nations around Israel, who served the gods of those nations. What they were like we can see to-day in the "dancing dervishes" or the "howling dervishes" of the Turks at Constantinople. They whirl around on their toes with their arms stretched out, or they sit on the floor and rock back and forth, singing strange chants, to the sound of small drums and tambourines, till they become excited and dizzy, and think that a spirit from God is in them.

In 1 Samuel xix. 18–24 you may see how much like these the first Israelite prophets were. Saul got excited with them, and those who saw him were ashamed that a king should fall so low as to get "among the prophets." This shows that such prophets were not respected in Israel. They were imitators of those in the tribes around it, like the "prophets of Baal," of whom we read in the story of Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 17–40). They went about in bands or "schools," because it is easier for a number of people to get excited together than singly. Amos (vii. 10–15) took good care to say that he was not that kind of a prophet, and we can see for ourselves that Elijah and Elisha were not. Some traces of this kind of prophecy survived to New Testament times (Acts ii. 1–13; 1 Cor. xiv. 1–19).

III. The Great Hebrew Prophets.

The first prophets of Israel were of this crazy and often unscrupulous kind; but from Elijah onward, for five centuries, a series of prophets rose of a very different kind. They held up two great thoughts.

First. That Jehovah, and He alone, was the God whom Israel ought to worship. He was its God. At first they seem to have believed that every other nation had its god also, as it had its king; but very soon they rose to the idea of one, and only one, heavenly King ruling over all nations alike. The gods whom other tribes worshipped were "not gods,"—delusions. The welfare of Israel, therefore, depended upon its obeying Jehovah alone. He had brought it out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land; and He only could bring it through any other danger that should rise before it.

Second. That obedience to Jehovah did not consist simply in worshipping Him in correct ways. He was a just God, a holy God, a pitying God, and no one would be accepted and protected by Him who was unjust, impure, or cruel. Here the prophet stood in contrast to the priest, whose business was to teach men to sacrifice and pray. The prophet required this; but he thundered that this would be useless, would even be disgusting to Jehovah, if the nation or the man was not righteous. Some of the prophets were of a priestly kind, but the greatest were preachers of national and personal justice and purity. To their keen eyes it was of small consequence that a nation was rich and powerful. These were not necessarily signs of Jehovah's favor. If it was careless of the poor (2 Sam. xii. 1–10), if its judges took bribes, if its private life was unclean, the judgment of Jehovah was preparing.

For this judgment the prophets looked sometimes far away and far ahead. They had a wide knowledge of the world, and often saw changes going on within the nation, or new powers rising and threatening which others did not see. Hence they were often able to prophesy in what way the wrath of God or His favor would come. They were not always correct in their predictions, but they were so often enough to make their prophecies seem supernaturally revealed; but the real reason was that they felt that the foundations of true and lasting prosperity were laid in righteousness, and, that where this was not, ruin was sure to come.

The Hebrew prophets are commonly divided into the *greater*—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—and *minor*—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Elijah, Elisha, and others named in the history are not included, because their prophecies were not preserved.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What is the difference between a foreteller and a forthteller? How does a preacher become a predicter? Do we not all say sometimes, "That is wrong, and, if you do it, you will suffer"?

2. Are there prophets in modern times? Was Garrison a prophet? Channing? Is an earnest speaker a prophet, whatever he speaks about? What is your idea of a prophet?

3. Need it discredit a prophet if his predictions fail? Is an act less right because it does not do the good we expect, or wrong because it does not do the harm?

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LESSON XI.

AMOS.

LESSON TEXT.—Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you.— AMOS v. 14.

I. THE OLDEST BOOK IN THE BIBLE.

It is thought that a few sentences were added later; but, in the main, the prophecy of Amos was the first book in the Old Testament that was written as it now stands, and therefore the first book in the Bible. It was written not far from 760 B.C., and is therefore nearly twenty-seven hundred years old. Amos was also the first prophet who wrote down his words. He did not expect what he said to happen for many years; and he wished it recorded, lest Israel should forget that it had been warned in time.

II. THE PROPHET AND HIS TIME.

Amos was not a professional prophet. He said very positively that he did not belong to any of the "schools" in which the prophets of that time were wont to go about (vii. 12–15). He was a shepherd, he said, and lived upon sycamore fruit, a sort of wild fig. Jehovah took him from the flock, and sent him to prophesy. He came from Tekoa, which is about eleven miles south of Jerusalem. He was therefore an inhabitant of the kingdom of Judah, though he brought a message to that of Israel, because there Jehovah was especially neglected. Jeroboam II. was then king of Israel, a great warrior and successful monarch. From the Nile to the Euphrates, no king was so powerful. So it was a time of great prosperity in the northern kingdom. Amos describes the luxury of it in vi. 1–6. It seemed a strange time to prophesy disaster. Yet, as often happens, when men become rich, the nation was growing selfish, careless of the poor, disregarding justice, practising dishonesty (v. 10–12; viii. 4–8). As for religion, Jehovah was worshipped; but, since the separation of Israel from Judah, where Jerusalem and the temple were, the people of Israel resorted more than ever to the local sanctuaries, where Jehovah was represented by golden calves or bulls. Here worship was conducted with great pomp and gorgeous rituals, and much wickedness was done under the guise of religion.

III. THE PROPHECY.

It was to one of these local sanctuaries at Bethel, where "the king's chapel" and "the king's court" were, and at the time of a great feast, when great sacrifices were offered and banquets were spread, that Amos, the herdsman, suddenly appeared. His speech was very skilfully arranged. He began by prophesying the doom of Israel's enemies for their transgressions,—Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and even Judah. So he won the attention and favor of his hearers. Then he turned upon the land in which he stood, and foretold the same wrath upon Israel. The fact that they had been the chosen people of Jehovah, instead of defending them from calamity, would more surely bring it. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (iii. 2). In vii. 1–9 we have a vivid picture of Amos pleading with Jehovah; very much like Abraham's argument for Sodom (Gen. xviii. 20–33),

but, like that, this was not successful. The prophet's wailing, melancholy chant pronounced the doom which in forty years more came:—

"The high places of Isaac shall be desolate,
And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste.
Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
And Israel shall be led away captive out of their own land."
(vii. 9–11.)

There are some tremendous symbols in iii. 12 and ix. 1–6 of the fate that was to come,—a fate that seemed so improbable.

Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, and its people carried away into exile. Amos also prophesied at the end of his terrible speech that they should be brought back again (ix. 11–15). The cities should be rebuilt, and the vineyards and gardens be planted again. But in this part of his prophecy, if, indeed, he wrote it, he was less successful. Part of Judah came back, but none of Israel, except, perhaps, a few individuals. Her land was taken by people of mixed blood, whom Judah disowned. Even in Jesus' time "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

IV. What Amos Taught.

We find Amos laying the foundations of what almost all the prophets proclaimed:—

1. That Jehovah was the God of the whole creation: "He formeth the mountains and createth the wind, maketh the morning darkness and treadeth upon the high places of the earth. Jehovah, the God of hosts, is His name" (iv. 13; v. 8; ix. 7; see also Psalm cxxxix. 1–12).

2. That worship is of no use, is hateful to Jehovah, if the daily life be unjust or impure. (v. 21–24.)

These ideas seem to us very commonplace, and we may wonder that they attracted so much attention when they were proclaimed. But it was because Amos so bravely uttered them so many centuries ago, and because so many brave men have preached and practised them, that we know them so well. Amos thus prepared the way for Jesus and the broad gospel which he brought. You will find a very good description of how such men feel in Jeremiah xx. 7–13.

Topics and Questions.

1. What do we mean by "the oldest book in the Bible"? Where were all the books that came before Amos in our Old Testament? Did Elijah and Elisha write anything?

2. What did people write with in those days? What on? Have we the very manuscript that Amos wrote? Have we the handwriting of any man in the Bible?

3. Why is Amos called the prophet of wrath? Do you think that God is ever angry? Is there such a feeling as "righteous indignation"? How does God show His wrath? Is it possible to be loving at the same time with being angry?

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LESSON XII.

HOSEA, THE PROPHET OF GOD'S LOVE.

(Hosea iv. 1-9; vi. 1-6; xi. 1-11; xiv.; and for the circumstances, 2 Kings xv. 8-31; 2 Chronicles xxviii. 16-27.)

LESSON TEXT.—He will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth. HOSEA vi. 3.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES (about 745-735 B.C.).

From fifteen to twenty years have passed since Amos spoke, and the ruin which he had foretold had drawn nearer. In fifteen years after the last of Hosea's prophecies the end of the kingdom of Israel came. Jeroboam II., the last of the strong kings of Israel, was dead; and a series of petty monarchs succeeded him, almost every one dying by violence. The Assyrians were drawing nearer on the north and east; and it became necessary to pay tribute to them to keep them off, while the same had to be done to Egypt to keep her armies off from the south-west. It was clear that the little kingdom could not stand long between these two great nations; yet any alliance or treaty with them was violently denounced by Hosea as distrust in Jehovah's power to save and a cringing to false gods.

II. THE PROPHET'S TONE.

Amos had been stern. He represented the justice of God. So did Hosea somewhat, but the prevailing tone of his message is tender and hopeful. He felt himself to be the representative of God's much-enduring love. This was partly because he was perhaps a man of gentle and loving nature, and partly because, unlike Amos, he was speaking to his own countrymen. But still more did his message come from his own experience. He had married a woman whom he loved dearly, but she left him. He followed her; and, when she fell into misfortune and was to be sold as a common slave, he bought her, and led her back home. He saw in God a love like his own, and believed that the nation whom He had chosen, but who wandered away from Him into dreadful calamities, would be brought back to Him. There is nothing more tender in the Bible than xi. 1-11, where Jehovah yearns over His people, and speaks to them as a despairing mother might speak to her wayward child (vi. 4).

He sees that He must punish them, but He cannot forsake them utterly (xi. 1-8).

He promises to bring Israel back from exile. They shall flee homeward like the birds that come from foreign lands in the spring. "They shall come trembling as a bird out of Egypt. And as a dove out of the land of Assyria; and I will make them to dwell in their houses, saith Jehovah."

So, again, at the end (xiv.):

"Israel shall blossom as the lily," etc.

Alas that this hopeful prediction never came true!

III. HIS TEACHINGS.

There is little about Jehovah as the God of all nations which we found Amos so emphasizing It is probably taken for granted.

Hosea speaks only of the relation of Jehovah to His own special people. But the worship of the calves or bulls which Amos hardly mentions Hosea denounces with great wrath (viii. 5, 6). We recall that this worship was especially common in Israel rather than in Judah, at the old Canaanite sanctuaries like Dan, Bethel, Gilgal, etc., and that the calf, while to the more intelligent an emblem of Jehovah, was probably to the common people an idol, and was a compromise with the heathen religion of the nations around Israel.

But Hosea is as emphatic as Amos on the need of common righteousness as the true worship of Jehovah, and the worthlessness of rites and ceremonies without. This is the chief characteristic of the Hebrew prophets, and makes a transition to Christianity. One saying of Hosea (vi. 6) Jesus quoted twice (Matt. ix. 13 and xii. 7), "I desired goodness and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." He must have felt drawn to Hosea's gentle and tender thoughts of God.

There are three other quotations made from Hosea in the New Testament, which show us how words that were spoken of one thing were applied to very different ones. Thus Hosea (x. 8) predicts that, when the Assyrians shall come to carry them away captive, the Israelites "shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall upon us." The Book of Revelation (vi. 16) says that, when the last judgment came, "the kings of the earth," etc., "said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne." So Matthew (ii. 15) says that the baby Jesus was carried to Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." But Hosea uses these words (xi. 1) of Israel brought up out of Egypt. When Paul used those stirring cries, "O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?" in 1 Cor. xv. 55, he is quoting from memory Hosea xiii. 14, O death, where are thy plagues? O sheol, where is thy destruction?"

There are some sayings of Hosea that are very striking, like proverbs. "They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (viii. 7). "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness; break up your fallow ground" (x. 12). "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone" (iv. 17).

Topics and Questions.

1. What differences are there between Amos and Hosea? Which do you like best? Which is the more like Jesus? Which do you think did the more good?

2. Are we apt to be more patient with our own people or with foreigners? Why? Why do you believe that God is love? How does He show His love? Which does the more good, love or anger? Can they go together? What do we mean by the wrath of God? Can wrath and love go together?

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LESSON XIII.

THE END OF ISRAEL.

(2 Kings xv., xvi., xvii.)

LESSON TEXT.— They sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.— HOSEA viii. 7.

I. THE USURPERS.

After Jeroboam II. the kingdom of Israel steadily declined. He was followed by a series of kings, most of whom reigned but a short time each,—cut off by assassination. Jeroboam's son Zechariah reigned six months, and then was killed by Shallum, who after a month was murdered by Menahem. He had ten years, but they were not happy ones. For that Assyria of which we learned some time ago now makes itself felt in Israel. A great king, Tiglath-pileser or Pul, had mounted its throne.

He had conquered Babylon and Chaldea, and now turned his course against the Syrians. He was a cruel warrior, slaying or torturing without mercy. He took Hamath, the chief city of Northern Syria, and Menahem hastened to make peace with him by a tribute of nearly $4,000,000, probably worth in those days twenty times as much as now. Menahem was succeeded by his son Pekahiah, who after two years was assassinated by Pekah, who reigned twenty inglorious years. He joined with Rezin of Damascus in a savage attack upon Judah.

Ahaz, its king, sought most unfortunate aid from the Assyrians, who were only too glad to come. Everything in Damascus and Israel was captured except the two capital cities. Great numbers of the inhabitants were carried away. Israel had to pay an even larger tribute than before. Damascus was taken in two years, after five hundred and eighteen towns around it had been laid in ashes. Its king was beheaded, and its chief people carried into captivity. In 731 B.C. Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea, the last of the kings of Israel.

II. THE FALL OF SAMARIA.

Four years later Pul died, and Shalmaneser IV. became king of the Assyrians. Babylon revolted, and the Assyrian army appeared to have its hands full. It seemed a good time for other provinces to rebel also. Among them was Israel. Hoshea professed loyalty, but secretly he made advances to So, the Pharaoh of Egypt. So dreaded Assyria, for he knew that she was making these smaller kingdoms the stepping-stones to the conquest of his own kingdom. He was very willing to have Israel and Judah set up as barriers between him and the great nation of the northeast. Shalmaneser, however, found out the plot, and, as soon as he had subdued Babylon again, came against Samaria.

This city was as strong as its people knew how to make it, with double walls, reinforced by towers and bastions. The Assyrians built a heavy and high wall of earth around it, on which they mounted the clumsy rams and stone-throwing engines of the day. Not till after three years (for the Jews were always good fighters) was the great city taken, and Shalmaneser had been succeeded by Sargon, but then began a fearful vengeance. Some alabaster slabs, with inscriptions and pictures of the event, are

still preserved. They "shew a procession of captives issuing from a gateway, and making their way to the presence of the Great King, who sits, gorgeously arrayed, on his throne, to receive them. Some of the prisoners are put to death before him by the dagger and sword. Others lie on the ground in the agony of being flayed alive. In every direction men are carrying off the spoils of the city,—arms, shields, chariots, vases." So after two hundred and forty years (960–720) died the kingdom of Israel.

III. The Exile.

It was the custom of those days for the conquering nation to make sure of the conquered one by carrying away its chief members and bringing large numbers of its own people to take their places. From the city of Samaria over twenty-seven thousand inhabitants were thus carried away, and Assyrians, Babylonians, etc., brought in with their own rulers. Probably only a small part of the inhabitants, on the whole, were sent into exile from Israel; but, as they were the leaders and the most energetic men, those who were left were practically helpless. Part of the exiles were carried past Babylonia and Assyria to the mountains of Media, and part to the fertile plains of North-western Mesopotamia, not far from the Haran where Abram and Lot had been shepherds so long before. What a history the people of Abram had passed through since then! They seem to have been well treated, and found life pleasant, as memories of the old home faded away, as their religion became more like that of the people about them, and as their children intermarried with those of their conquerors.

IV. The Lost Tribes of Israel.

The ten tribes, however, as such or as a nation, ceased to exist. The fate of the individual Israelites cannot be clearly traced. The exiles melted into their surroundings, or, when Assyria was at last conquered by the Medes and Persians, wandered to various parts of the earth. Many went back to the homeland, and their descendants made part of the mixed multitude of Galilee in Jesus' time. Of those who were left at home, some were carried off to Egypt, but the rest intermarried with the foreigners who had been brought in, and formed the Samaritans, whom the later Jews despised so much. A priest was brought back from exile for them, and a medley of religions, the worship of Jehovah among them, gathered about Bethel. But the glory of Israel was ended.

Topics and Questions.

1. Recall what you know of Syria and Assyria. Was the fall of Israel hastened by the luxury which the prophets so denounced? What has been the history of other nations in this respect? Look up in Bible Dictionaries the arms and siege-apparatus of those days.

2. What changes have taken place in the customs of war since those days? Are captives ever killed or tortured now? How about Hale and André in the Revolution? What other things are considered wrong in war to-day? Is war ever justifiable?

3. Are conquered people ever carried into exile now? What is the story of "Evangeline"? Suppose Spain had conquered us, would you have been happy among the beautiful hills of Castile or Aragon? What ideas have been held about the fate of the Ten Tribes? What really became of them? Read Psalm lxxx. as a requiem over the dead nation.

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LESSON XIV.

THE BATTLE OF THE GODS IN JUDAH.

LESSON TEXT.— What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God? —MICAH vi. 8.

Israel had fallen, but Judah stood one hundred and thirty years longer. It kept its hereditary monarchy; and its throne was not seized, as that of Israel had so often been, by whoever was the strongest general. Its political history is less exciting, but its religious history becomes very much so. There were two parties in the nation. One believed in Jehovah alone, and would have no other god worshipped. The other party believed in many gods, and would have altars and temples for them all, Jehovah among them.

I. THE KINGS.

Hezekiah (726–697) (2 Kings xviii. 1–22, 33–36; xix.) had been king six years when Israel fell. He was of the Jehovah party (2 Kings xviii. 1–7), and destroyed the altars and images of other gods. His son Manasseh (697–642) was of the other side (xxi. 1–9). His son Amon followed him (xxi. 19–22). Amon's son Josiah (639–609) seems to have agreed with him at first, but the finding of a book of the law (xxii. 3–20) showed him that he was doing wrong, and henceforth he was "a good king"; *i.e.*, a champion of Jehovah alone. What this book was and what a change it made in the ideas and ways of Judah we shall see later. Let us remember now that, until this book was found or written, there was no law against following after other gods, marrying wives from other nations, or other things of the kind which now came to be looked upon as abominable.

II. THE PROPHETS.

The leaders of the Jehovah party were the prophets, Elijah and Elisha. Amos and Hosea had stood for Jehovah in Israel against Baal or any other foreign god. Now a still greater series of prophets rose in Judah. The greatest of these and of all was Isaiah, whom we must consider later by himself. Toward the latter part of Hezekiah's reign arose a younger man, Micah, a very noble and earnest prophet, who made a famous plea for a good life as better than mere religious ceremony (Micah vi. 6–8).

III. HEZEKIAH.

Except Josiah, the only one of these kings who is very interesting, is Hezekiah. Samaria was taken, and the king knew that Jerusalem's turn would come next. The Assyrian king, Sennacherib, did conquer Judah to the very gates of the capital; but Hezekiah bought him off with a great tribute, which took all the money there was in the temple and in the palace, and even the gold plating from the temple doors and pillars. When the Assyrians retired, Hezekiah turned and made a treaty with the king of Egypt. This brought the Assyrians back (xix. 17–22, 33–37). A great army invaded Judah, and disaster seemed sure, when, as is supposed, a dreadful pestilence fell upon the host of the Assyrians, and Sennacherib went home.

IV. The Shadow on the Dial (xx. 1–11).

Then something happened which reminds us of the strange story of Joshua stopping the sun (Joshua x. 12–14). Hezekiah was very ill. And the prophet Isaiah said to him, "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die." But the king prayed so hard for life that the Lord gave him fifteen years more to live Isaiah cured his boil by a simple remedy, but the king could hardly believe that he was to live. He asked for a sign. Isaiah showed him a sun-dial (for there were no clocks in those days), and asked him whether he would have the shadow move suddenly forward or backward ten degrees. Hezekiah answered that it would be more of a miracle for it to go backward. So it did, says the story, and the king believed that he should live.

V. A Foolish Act (xx. 14–21).

It almost seems, however, as if Hezekiah's severe sickness had weakened his mind, for he soon did a very strange and unwise thing. The king of Babylon sent an embassy to his fellow-king to congratulate him on his recovery. They spoke so friendly to him that he showed them over his kingdom, and even into his palace, where by this time new treasures seem to have been gathered. This foolish information to one who was sure soon to be an enemy was too much for Isaiah's patience, and he warned the king that the time would come when Judah would be carried into captivity at Babylon. Hezekiah submitted to God's will, but, on second thought, smiled, and said that anyhow there would be peace through his days,—not a very fine thing for a king to say, who is supposed to love his country. This is the last that we hear of him.

Topics and Questions.

1. Would you prefer to have lived in Israel or in Judah? Why? What can you recall of the great secession and of the history of Israel? Who were its greatest kings? What had given Judah its greatest fame?

2. What is monotheism? Polytheism? Why is it better to worship one God than many gods? Are there any polytheists now in the world? If people worship saints, guardian angels, etc., are they polytheists? What law was there at this time against worshipping many gods?

3. How do you like King Hezekiah? Ought he to have paid tribute? Can sickness be cured by prayer? What do you think of his last saying? What means the saying, "After me the deluge"?

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LESSON XV.

DEUTERONOMY.

LESSON TEXT.— Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.— DEUT. vi. 4, 5.

I. THE FINDING OF THE BOOK (2 KING xxii. 1–11, xxiii. 1–25).

Among the good kings of Judah was Josiah, a faithful worshipper of Jehovah. About the year 622 B.C. Hilkiah, the high priest, sent to the king a book of laws which he said he had found in the temple. When Josiah heard it read, he was frightened; for it said that only Jehovah should be worshipped in Israel, and that, if the nation allowed any other god to be adored, dreadful things would happen to it,—pestilences, famines, droughts, and wars. He called the people together, and had the book read to them. Then he had all the altars of foreign gods destroyed, and their priests driven away. He did his best in every way to make up to Jehovah for the nation's neglect of Him and its admission of other religions.

II. WHAT BOOK IT WAS.

It is now believed that this book was a large part, if not the whole, of the book called Deuteronomy, the fifth book in the present order of the Old Testament. The word means the "Second Law." The name is not a part of the book, but was given to it in later times by those who considered the book a revised form of the laws of Moses as given in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. In reality, it was written before they were, although long after Moses. In fact, it is commonly thought to have been written, if not by those who pretended to find it, at least by some one who lived shortly before. It claims to be the words of Moses, as reported by some hearer; but it was very common in ancient times to ascribe books to great men who, as the real writers thought, would have said such things if they had written at all.

III. WHAT KIND OF A BOOK IT WAS.

Deuteronomy is the law book of the prophets. It works out their main ideas into practical precepts. The prophets, as we have seen, were the champions of Jehovah, and denounced all other gods and the worship of them. They taught also that real worship is of the life, and no outward ceremony was of any value unless the worshipper practised justice, mercy, humility, and the other virtues of daily life. These two ideas run through this book. Its spirit is the nearest to that of the Gospel of all the law books of Israel, and, with very few exceptions, of all the books of the Old Testament. Jesus seems to have loved it very much, and the text at the head of this lesson, which is the keynote of the whole book, is quoted by him as one of "the two great commandments." (Mark xii. 29, 30.) The book is cited eighty times in the New Testament (see Toy, "Quotations," etc.).

IV. THE THREE PRECEPTS.

The three main things which this book was meant to teach are:—

1. Jehovah alone must be worshipped. Before the prophets,

as we have seen, other gods had altars in Israel, and sacrifice was offered to them side by side with Jehovah. This lax and genial custom the prophets, and now this book as their spokesman, sternly forbade. This was not merely from respect to Jehovah, but from hatred to and disgust with the wicked practices which accompanied the worship of other gods.

2. More original with this book was the command to worship Jehovah only at Jerusalem (chapter xii.). The city is not named, for it did not exist at the time when Deuteronomy professed to have been written; but it is plain what "place" is meant. Hitherto there had been sanctuaries and altars all over the country. It was impossible to watch them all and to be sure that evil things were not done there. The worship must be concentrated where it could be easily superintended and kept pure. It was a great change, and could not be carried out at once; but it prevailed at last. But most beautiful of all was the law of love.

3. Except toward idolatry and foreign nations, all should be done in love. God chose Israel because He loved it (vii. 7–11), and Israel must serve God from a returning love (x. 12–18). There is a beautiful passage (xx. 11–14) which claims that the love of God is really the most natural thing in the world, and in xxxiii. 27 the first two lines is one of the most tender descriptions of God's support and protection that ever were written. These two passages and the lesson text ought to be learned by heart.

Thus this love of God for man and of man for God should be carried out toward all that are weak and dependent. The commandment about the Sabbath counsels kindness to all servants and cattle because Israel had known what it was to be a servant in Egypt (v. 12–15). For the same reason Israel should love the stranger (x. 19). The hired servant must be kindly and justly used (xxiv. 14, 15). Also the poor debtor (xxiv. 10–13). So men should treat animals well (xxv. 4; xxii. 6, 7; v. 14). We cannot wonder that Jesus should have loved this book, and we must believe that it helped to educate mankind into that perfect love for God and man which Jesus taught and which filled his own life.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

(The teacher should read the book through, and mark the verses which are best worth talking about.)

1. What does the word Deuteronomy mean? What, then, was thought to be the *first* law? Was it? What do you think of the practice of putting new thoughts under old names? Can we be sure what the great men of former days would think or say if they were living now?

2. What is the difference between priests and prophets? Are both useful? Are both characters ever united in the same person? Why do you think that God loves you? Why should this lead us to love other men? Why animals?

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LESSON XVI.

ISAIAH.

LESSON TEXT.— Here am I; send me.— ISAIAH vi. 8.

The Book of Isaiah, as it stands in our Bible, should be divided into two parts. The second of these, beginning at chapter xl., is the work of an unknown prophet who lived near the close of the exile in Babylonia, and saw deliverance coming. The other part, except some additions by unknown hands, was written by Isaiah, a citizen of Jerusalem, a man of high social standing. We must study him well; for, though not as great as the later prophets, he is a most noble and interesting figure.

I. THE CALL.

The occasion on which he felt himself summoned to be a prophet of Jehovah is described in chapter vi. It is a very solemn account of his vision of the Lord, whom he does not try to describe, of the choir of seraphim singing responsively, of the smoking incense, of his humility, of the call for a messenger, and of his volunteering to go. It is a sad errand to a falling nation, but there is promise of the saving of a part of it to be the stump which shall sprout again.

II. THE GREAT ARRAIGNMENT.

The message which Isaiah had to give he speaks boldly. Perhaps we have it best in the first two chapters. Here we find the same accusation of wandering from Jehovah, of oppressing the poor, taking bribes which other prophets had made. The nation is compared to a body covered with sores. What is needed is a change of living. Religion alone is not enough. In a fine passage (i. 10–18) the Lord is made to say that He will have no more sacrifices or keeping of religious holidays. He is tired of them. He will not listen to prayers. There is only one thing that can do any good,—plain, genuine repentance and amendment. He calls the people to come and reason with Him, and He will make a bargain with them. If they will simply "cease to do evil" and "learn to do well," He will make their starved souls as white as snow.

But Jehovah in Isaiah's vision had no hope that they would do this. It is so much easier to do a few ceremonial acts, to offer one or two sheep or observe a Sabbath than to keep at the long task of reforming one's habits and clearing one's conscience, that they are sure to drop back into that. It is so much more picturesque and pleasant, too! So Isaiah passes soon into threats and visions of doom. He sees the punishment coming, the trees of which they are so proud, the cedars and the oaks, the towers and the walls, the noble ships, and even the hills and the mountains brought low by the wrath of the Lord. The people rush to hide themselves in the clefts of the rocks, till they seem so poor and wretched that the Lord stops punishing for very pity and contempt.

III. THE WILD GRAPES.

In chapter v. is a graphic likening of Judah to a vineyard which the Lord planted and cared for; but, instead of sweet and large fruit, it brought forth small and sour grapes. What more

could He do? So down with it! Let the ground have its way and bring forth briers and thorns. Then follows a series of ringing "woes" that remind us of those which the Master pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees seven hundred years later (Matt. xxiii.). How little progress humanity makes!

IV. The Instruments of Wrath.

Then follows (26–30) the vision of Jehovah turning away and whistling for the warlike nations afar off to come as His means of punishment. Both Isaiahs have this thought. They are not daunted at the prospect of invasion and conquest. Behind the heathen kings and their armies they see the dim form of Jehovah holding them all in His hand. They are His instruments, and, however terrible they may be, roaring like great herds of lions, unsleeping and unrelenting, they are under control of Jehovah. When He commands, they will stop, as at His command they began. So in the most terrible threats of the earlier Isaiah we hear that softer tone which we shall find dominant in the prophecies of the later.

Topics and Questions.

1. What is a vision? How much truth do you think there was in Isaiah's? Can you imagine how the Temple looked from the court where Isaiah must have stood? Do men have calls now to any kind of work? How does such a call differ from the voice of conscience?

2. How does a prophet differ from a preacher? Is it better to threaten or to persuade, to frighten or to encourage? Were Isaiah's accusations just? Would they be just to-day? Are fashionable women now like those described in iii. 16-24?

References.

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LESSON XVII.

THE NEW HOPE.—IMMANUEL.

LESSON TEXT.— Immanuel, God with us.— MATTHEW i. 23.

I. THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL.

For a nation whom God had promised to make great, the outlook was strange. Destruction, not glory, seems to be its coming fate. How to explain it? Three thoughts came to comfort the nation.

1. *God's Strange Helpers.* These mighty and proud nations that were coming to overthrow Judah were not powerful in themselves, but only as Jehovah gave them strength to be the instruments of His wrath. Israel had sinned, and now it must be punished. But not forever. Some day it would be taken back into God's favor, purified and renewed.

2. *The Remnant.* Isaiah saw two means by which God would do this. One was by reducing the nation to a small number of its very best people. The rest might be slain in battle or carried into exile, or might desert and join other nations. At last when the chaff had thus been blown away, a little pile of good grain would be left, which should be the beginning of the new glory. As he said, just as a tree, when cut down to a mere stump might have life enough left to put forth shoots and grow again large, "so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

3. *The Messiah.* Then shall rise a great leader who shall bring victory and peace. Isaiah met King Ahaz (chapter vii.) when he was preparing to defend against the combined forces of Israel and Damascus, and told him not to be afraid, that a child was soon to be born whose name should be Immanuel ("El," God, and "imanu," with us). Before this child should grow old enough to know the difference between good and evil, these two kings would be defeated and driven away. In ix. 6, 7, this child is spoken of as already born. He is to be a king, sitting on the throne which the great David had set in Jerusalem, and he should govern forever. He shall be called "Wonderful," "Counsellor," "The Mighty God," as the representative of Jehovah (Psalm lxxii.), etc.

This is the first appearance of the idea which was to take possession of the imagination of the nation and comfort it in all its trials and sufferings. Isaiah evidently was not looking far into the future. The child was soon to be born. But the fact that no such king came then did not kill the hope that he would come some day. So began the hope of a Messiah, or anointed one (in Greek the "Christ," or christened one), which we find in the New Testament, and which is still kept by many Jews. These believe that Jesus was not the real Messiah. He is yet to come, and the Jewish sect called Zionists believe that the nation will then go back to Palestine and have a glorious life there. But we must not forget that Isaiah believed that he was to come soon.

II. THE GOLDEN AGE.

Then should follow a time of great peace and security. We can imagine how lovely the picture which Isaiah draws in chapter xi. must have looked to the poor, hard-pressed people of Jerusalem, expecting every year to see the dreaded Assyrians, who had

made such ruin of Samaria, come down on their beautiful city. They were to have a king of the family of David, to which they had always been loyal. The spirit of the Lord should rest upon him,—the spirit of wisdom and understanding for which Solomon had prayed, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He should rule with righteousness and equity. There should be no more hurt or destruction. The animals should no longer fight or kill each other, but babies shall play unharmed with serpents. The earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

III. Babylon's Turn.

But the proud city which had so lorded it over the East should in its turn be destroyed. Isaiah saw a dark storm-cloud rising beyond Babylon, which would in time overwhelm it. The prophets of Israel had a wide and wise outlook over the world, and seem to have foreseen what no one else suspected. Isaiah knew that the Medes were growing strong, while the Babylonians were growing careless and corrupt; and he sees in the future Jehovah calling them against Babylon as he had called Babylon against Jerusalem. The immense city, which is wonderful to read of even now for splendor and massiveness, would become as Sodom and Gomorrah. There is a wonderfully vivid description of how the dead, who wandered half-awake and stupid in the regions under the earth called hell (the hollow), were stirred at the sight of the mighty king of Babylon coming down to be like the rest of them. They look at him curiously. "Is this the man that made the earth tremble, that did shake kingdoms?"

So Isaiah comforted his people while he alarmed them. They had sinned. They had forsaken Jehovah for other gods, and now He would forsake them for other nations. Yet, if they would repent, cease to do evil and learn to do well, would both be righteous themselves and make justice and order reign throughout the nation, they should at last be restored to His favor, see their enemies confounded, and be made once more powerful. The prophecy did not come true in the form which they expected. The Messiah was not a mighty king and general, nor was the kingdom of God one of outward power and splendor. In fact, they did not know their Messiah when he came. But that was because he was greater than their dreams.

Topics and Questions.

1. What is meant by the text "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee"? Does God use the ambitions of men to carry out his own purposes through them? Does he use even our own selfishness to teach us by experience?

2. Are there not in every city or nation a few who lead it or who keep it good by their influence and example? Are most people independent or do they follow fashions? How much real thinking do most of us do? How much do we guide ourselves and how much are we guided by others?

3. What does "Messiah" mean? "Christ"? Why should they be called "anointed"? Did people always look forward to a "Golden Age"? How about the story of Eden? Which way does the best lie, ahead or behind? What is the good of hoping?

References.

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LESSON XVIII.

THE FALL OF JUDAH.

(2 Kings xxiii. 31–37; xxiv., xxv.)

LESSON TEXT.— Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!—JEREMIAH ix. 1.

I. THE FALL OF ASSYRIA.

The kingdom of Assyria, so long the terror of the East, was in its turn afraid of the growing power of the Babylonians. One nation could not long hold sway, in those days. Ambitions rose in new peoples. The prophet Nahum had foreseen this, and exulted savagely over the downfall of the enemy of his country (i. 1–10, iii. 7–19). The king of Egypt (a land which had always been a rival of the eastern nations), Pharaoh-necoh, saw his opportunity to take a part of the dying kingdom. He had slain Josiah, and now took his son Jehoahaz from the throne after a reign of only three months, and set his brother Jehoiakim in his place. The latter paid tribute, and was subject to Egypt. But Necoh soon had his turn. He marched against the young king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, or Nebuchadrezzar, as he should be called, to conquer him before he should be ready to fight. But he proved to be entirely ready, and, in a great battle at Carchemish on the river Euphrates, beat Necoh badly. Henceforth it is with Nebuchadrezzar that Judah has to deal. The king of Egypt kept at home, having lost all his possessions "from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates."

II. THE END OF THE ROYAL LINE OF JUDAH.

The son of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin (notice the name of Jehovah, or Jah, in these names, as well as the name of Nebo, a god of Babylon, in Nebuchadrezzar), seems to have inherited from his father little except the enmity of Babylon, whose king laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoiachin had to surrender, and was carried away with his court and the best soldiers and workmen of his kingdom to Mesopotamia, on the river Chebar, 597 B.C. The king spent thirty-seven years in a Babylonian prison till another king of that land released him and treated him as became his royal descent. No more was heard of him after that. So ended the long line of the kings of Judah after nearly 400 years of division (960–597), and nearly five hundred years since the first king, Saul (1060).

III. THE END OF JERUSALEM.

Nebuchadrezzar made his uncle Mattaniah king, and gave him the Hebrew name of Zedekiah. He seems not to have had much sense; for he rebelled against his nephew, the king of Babylon, and brought that fiery warrior down with his army to besiege Jerusalem. The siege lasted over a year, and the people suffered much from famine (see Lamentations ii. 19–22, iv. 10). At last the city was taken, and Jerusalem, the city on the rock, the fortress that David had taken from the mocking Jebusites (2 Sam. v. 6–12), the palace that he built and the temple that was the pride of Solomon's heart, were destroyed (Nahum ii.). Walls were broken down and the houses burned. The ornaments and imple-

ments of the Temple were broken and carried away. So the ruins remained untouched for many years. Judah had followed Israel. The kingdom could probably not have stood even if it had remained united; but, divided and even at war within itself, its doom was sure.

IV. THE EXILE.

According to the Oriental policy of that day, Nebuchadrezzar proceeded to make rebellion and restoration impossible. He had destroyed the capital, now he destroyed or crippled the nation. The king, Zedekiah, was barbarously treated. His sons were put to death before his eyes, so that none of them could succeed him on the throne. His own eyes were put out, and he was carried captive to his own city of Babylon. The best inhabitants of the land, as we have seen, had already been carried to Mesopotamia; but the citizens of Jerusalem, also, were now (586) taken, and only the poorest of the people were left to live upon vineyards and care for sheep and cattle. The chief priest and other prominent citizens to the number of nearly eighty were put to death half way to Babylon, but the rest reached those who had been carried off with Jehoiachin. The old spirit of Judah flared up for a little while, when Ishmael, "of the seed royal," slew Gedaliah, the Babylonian governor, and set free those who were left in the land. Ishmael was pursued and killed, however, and the best of those who were left, fearful of the vengeance of the Babylonians, fled to Egypt, taking with them the prophet Jeremiah.

7 DESOLATION.

The blow was crushing, all the more so because it was so bewildering. To the last it seemed impossible that Jerusalem could fall. Samaria was simply a great city, but Jerusalem was "the city of the Lord." Had not Jehovah promised to make a great nation of the children of Israel? How, then, could these barbarians, in spite of their numbers and their engines of war, hope to conquer them? But now it had happened. The city was not only taken, but destroyed. Ruins only were left, and of the people only a few of the lowest. Sick of soul as well sore of body, the exiles took up their march into a strange land.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. Assyria, Babylon, Media, where were they and what do you know about them? Look at Egypt on the map and see how Judah was between it and Babylon.

2. Review the history of Jerusalem and the great kings who had ruled in it. Why was its fall so serious? What was the promise to Abraham? What did the people think they had a right to expect? Why had they not a right to expect it?

3. Do you recall any cases in modern times of the carrying away of a people by their conquerors? What was the purpose of the exile? What other ways were there of treating the conquered? What did we do with the Spanish prisoners?

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LESSON XIX.

IN EXILE.

(Psalms xlii., xliii., cxxxvii., xciv., lxxxviii.; Lamentations i., ii., iii.)

LESSON TEXT.— If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not.— PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6.

I. HOMESICKNESS.

It was not strange that the exiles at first longed for home. Psalms xlii., xliii., and cxxxvii. express this feeling and the bitterness felt toward their captors. But, as time passed, they grew more reconciled to their situation. Unlike the captives from Israel, who were sent to the mountains of Media or to the north of Mesopotamia, those from Judah were settled near Babylon, in a most fertile region. At first they were set at work on the enormous walls and structures of the city, which Nebuchadrezzar was rebuilding; but in time they were left to themselves, and, as Jeremiah had told them to do (xxix. 1–7), they built houses, planted gardens, and ate the fruit of their own labors. When Jehoiachin was released, he became their king again; and, with their elders over separate communities, they formed a kingdom within the kingdom. They learned to trade, at which they became expert. Some of them, like Nehemiah and Daniel, rose to high favor with their conquerors, as Joseph had done in Egypt so long before. In time a generation grew up which had never seen Jerusalem; and the exiles became so contented in their new home that most of them, even when the way was opened to them, never returned to the old country.

II. DISCIPLINE.

The captives had learned much from their disasters. Instead of confidently expecting Jehovah to protect them from trouble because he was their God, they knew now that they had sinned against Him and were undergoing punishment. This sobered them, and they became intense in their piety and their loyalty to Jehovah. Henceforth we hear nothing more of idols or other gods or of evil practices in worship. To win back the favor of God as the indispensable means of return to their own land and prosperity there became the constant thought of the better part of the exiles. They were the best of their nation. As one said of our Puritan forefathers, God had sifted a nation to get this seed, and the choicest of them never lost the love of home.

III. RELIGION.

Their temple they could not bring with them, and they were unable or forbidden to build another. Their piety had to find other means of expression. In place of the sacrifices they adopted fasting, which is a kind of sacrifice that needs no altar; and from their natural custom of meeting to read what books they had and to pray, sprang up meeting-houses or synagogues, without priest, altar, or offering, but so convenient for each neighborhood that they went back with them to Judea, remain the place of worship wherever Jews are, and became the ancestors of our own local churches. Since the exiles could not observe old feasts, they kept the Sabbath the more strictly. The Babylonians had also their Sabbath, or weekly day of rest. Then they met in their syna-

gogues, listened to the reading and expounding of the law, and cherished their national traditions.

IV. The New Books.

From this lesson of their sufferings and this habit of brooding over their history sprang a new literature. Professor Kent, of Yale, says of the four centuries from the beginning of the exile onward, "It is now generally accepted that more than half of the literature of the Old Testament comes from this period, when the leaders of the Jewish race meditated and wrote rather than acted; while probably every book of that ancient library was either written then or else edited and revised." It was in Babylon that the Jews first heard those stories of creation, Eden, and the flood which they rewrote, improved, and placed at the beginning of the first book in their collection. These stories of their early history were written which were woven with older ones into the historical parts of the Pentateuch. Scholars can still draw out the various threads which thus were brought together.

Joshua was begun and Judges was compiled from stories current among the people. Samuel and Kings show history written from the point of view from which the exiles judged their own experience,—that misfortune comes from serving other gods and prosperity from returning to Jehovah. Deuteronomy was already mainly in shape, and many of the prophetic writings, from Amos to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were writing. Ruth belongs to this time, also Obadiah and Lamentations. The laws were gathering which were later collected, with many additions, in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Psalms and Proverbs were also in process of collection. Altogether the exile was a fruitful time for the Old Testament.

V. Exclusiveness.

It must be confessed, however, that the Jewish nature became not only intense, but narrow. Partly by being driven back upon themselves in a strange land, but also by believing more deeply in their choice by Jehovah for a peculiar glory and dignity when their discipline was over, they became narrow, exclusive, proud, and bitter, even in their disgrace. The old joyousness and geniality disappeared. From that day to this they have been "a peculiar people."

Topics and Questions.

1. Trace the route from Jerusalem to Babylon. How would the exiles travel? Did all the exiles go back? Why not? Do people still come to love foreign lands better than their own?

2. What is the effect of adversity? Does it harden or soften? Which did it do to the exiles? Do you think that they deserved their sufferings? What consolations had they?

3. Did you ever see a synagogue? What was done in it? What was the difference between the Temple and a synagogue? Read Luke iv. 16-20. What books now in the Old Testament were written, compiled, or begun in the Captivity? What is the Documentary Theory? Compare Gen. i., ii. 1-3, with ii. 3-22. What differences of style do you see? Also compare Gen. vi. 9-22 with vii. 1-6. How do you account for the differences? If you have time, read Ezekiel, i., ii., iii. 1-14, xviii., xxxvii. 1-4.

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LESSON XX.

STORIES OF THE EXILE. I.

LESSON TEXT.— Blessed be the name of God forever and ever: for wisdom and might are His.— DANIEL ii. 20.

WHEN AND WHY TOLD.

Long after the exile (about 170 B.C.) the Jews, in their own land, were dreadfully oppressed by a Greek king, Antiochus Epiphanes. To cheer them up, stories were written about glorious deeds of Jewish heroes in former sufferings. Some of these stories hid prophecies of the overthrow of Antiochus and his like. Others, which we shall now tell, told simply of brave and patriotic deeds. They were told as of Daniel, a young Jew, who was carried to Babylon with Jehoiakim, and three of his companions.

I. THE WONDERFUL DIET (DANIEL i. 1–17).

Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, asked his servant Ashpenaz to bring him some of the children of Israel, of royal descent, handsome, sound, and quick of mind, that they might learn the language and ways of their conquerors. They were to be fed from the king's own stores, with the best of meat and wine, for three years. Then they were to enter the service of the king. Those chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were given Babylonian names,—Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

But Daniel, in his Jewish pride, refused to eat the food of heathens, and asked Ashpenaz to give him only herbs and water. Ashpenaz, who was very fond of him, objected that Daniel would look so much thinner and paler than the other people in the palace, that he would be found out in his disobedience. But Daniel and his three companions begged to be tried on this diet for ten days. Then, if the result was not satisfactory, they would yield. At the end of that time their faces were found to be fairer and fatter than any others.

II. THE FIERY FURNACE (DANIEL iii.).

Nebuchadrezzar set up a statue in a plain, over eighty feet tall, and commanded that, when the trumpets should blow, every one should fall down and worship it. All did so but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The king was enraged, and called them to account. They were firm; and he ordered them thrown into a furnace of fire, seven times hotter than usual. It was so hot that the soldiers who threw them in were burned to death. But the king, looking in, saw four men walking calmly about in the flames. The fourth was like a son of the gods or an angel. Then he called them to come out; and there was not a hair of their heads singed, nor had the smell of fire come upon them. Then the king, being much astonished, made a decree that no one should henceforth speak ill of the God of these men, who could so deliver them.

III. BEL AND THE DRAGON.

Between the Old Testament and the New are often bound in a number of books called the *Apocrypha*. Protestants think that they are not of as much value as the Old Testament, but Catholics think they are. One of these little books tells the story of the

contest between Daniel and the wily priests of Bel, one of the gods of Babylon. The king went every day to worship the idol, and spent a great sum upon provisions for him to eat. Seeing that Daniel did not worship this idol, the king demanded to know why. Daniel answered that he did not worship things made with hands, but only the living God. Whereupon the king claimed that a god that ate so much every day must be living. Daniel was much amused; and the king, calling the priests, said that either they or Daniel must die, according as he could prove his case or not. The priests then proposed a test. The king was to put the meat and wine on the table in the temple, and shut and seal the door. They had a secret door under the table by which they, with their wives and children, could go in and have a good feast. But Daniel strewed light ashes over the floor; and, when the king went in the next morning, the food was gone, but on the floor were the foot-marks of men, women, and children. Then the king had the priests and their families slain, and gave the idol to Daniel, who soon made an end of him and his temple.

There was also a great brass dragon whom people worshipped in Babylon. The king thought him alive because he ate and drank whatever was put into his mouth. Daniel obtained the king's leave to show whether he was alive or not. He boiled together pitch, fat, and hair, made lumps of them, put them in the dragon's mouth, and burst him open. "So this is the kind of god you worship," said Daniel. (What followed is better told in the story of the Lions' Den, in our next lesson.)

IV. A King that ate Grass like an Ox (Daniel iv.).

Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, had a dream which none of his wise men could interpret. He saw a tree of enormous size, whose top reached to heaven; and a voice came that it should be cut down, leaving only a stump among the grass and the beasts of the field. Daniel was called in, and said that the tree meant the king, whose glory filled the earth and reached to heaven. He should be driven from among men. His dwelling should be among the beasts of the field, and he should eat grass like an ox.

A year later the king was walking in his palace; and he said to himself, Is not this great Babylon that I have builded? At once "he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws." But, when he lifted up his eyes to heaven and honored God, he was restored to his shape and his palace.

Topics and Questions.

1. How much had the simple diet to do with Daniel's health? Is rich food good for us? What is vegetarianism? What do you think of it?

2. What is a martyr? When did any die for their religion? Were any burned? Who? What helped them to bear the pain? How much power has mind over body?

3. What is an idol? Are there any to-day? Do you think people worship the idol itself? What is the difference between an idol and an idea of God? Are not both representations? Do priests often deceive the people? Do you know any such cases?

4. Do you know Longfellow's poem, "Robert of Sicily"? Would it not be well for any of us to be humbled when we grow proud? Ought we ever to be proud? Is it all our own strength or mind that brings us success? What truth, then, is there in this story?

LESSON XXI.

STORIES OF THE EXILE. II.

LESSON TEXT.— Great is truth, and mighty above all things.— 1 ESDRAS iv. 41.

I. THE THREE SENTIMENTS (1 ESDRAS iii., iv.).

Three young men kept guard over the bed-chamber of Darius, king of the Medes and Persians. One night they agreed that each should write a sentiment or thought, and put it under the king's pillow. He who wrote the best should have a great reward. The king gathered all his princes, and the writings were read before him.

The first was, "Wine is the strongest" (because it has so great power over men's brains, whether the king's or the peasant's).

The second was, "The king is strongest" (because he is lord of many lands, and all men serve him and die for him).

The third was, "Women are strongest" (because men do great things for the love of wife and daughters), "but above all things Truth beareth away the victory." "It endureth, and is always strong. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards. She is the strength, power, and majesty of all ages."

And all the people shouted, "Great is Truth, and mighty above all things." And great honors and presents were given to the one who wrote of truth.

II. DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN (DANIEL vi.).

Darius's officers were jealous of Daniel; and they induced the king to decree that any one who should ask anything of god or man, save of the king, should be thrown to the lions. Now Daniel prayed three times a day, his window being open toward Jerusalem. The officers saw him, and told the king. He was very sorry, for he loved Daniel; but the officers reminded him that "the law of the Medes and Persians altereth not." So Daniel was thrown in, a stone was laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own ring.

But the king could not sleep, and early in the morning he ran to the den and called with a lamentable voice to him. To his joy, Daniel answered, "My God hath sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths." Then the king had him drawn up and the officers thrown in; "and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." Then Darius made a decree that "all men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and steadfast forever." (Some curious details in "Bel and the Dragon.")

III. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST (DANIEL v.).

Belshazzar, king of Babylon, had a splendid banquet, to which he invited a great number of his nobles. He was the son of that Nebuchadrezzar who was so terribly punished for his pride, and one would think that he might have learned wisdom from his father's misfortunes. But, as he drank more and more wine, he became reckless, and ordered the sacred vessels of gold and silver which had been taken from the temple of Jerusalem to be brought in; and the princes and others drank their wine from them, singing praises to their idols.

Then there came out upon the wall opposite where the king was reclining the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote four words upon the wall, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN (number, number, weigh, divide). Naturally, the king was frightened, and sent for the astrologers, soothsayers, and other men who professed to be able to interpret dreams and visions; but they could not understand the words. The king, however, felt sure that they meant something dreadful. His conscience or his superstition smote him for using the sacred vessels so disrespectfully. The queen, however, remembered Daniel and his wonderful powers in this line. Nebuchadrezzar, it seems, had made him master of the magicians at his court. So Daniel was brought in.

Then the king, with many compliments, laid the puzzle before him, and promised to give him a robe of scarlet, a chain of gold about his neck, and the place of third ruler in the kingdom, if he would only tell what those strange words meant. Daniel answered him very sternly. He reminded him of what his father had suffered for his boasting, and accused him of the same sin, and, moreover, of sacrilege toward the God in whose hands his breath is, and whose are all his ways. Then he proceeded to interpret the writing. "Mene" (number) meant "God hath numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end." "Tekel" (weigh), "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." "Peres" (divide), "Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

The king seems to have accepted this interpretation, for he kept his promise to Daniel. Whether he took it seriously or not, we are not told. It is added simply that, on that very night, Darius, king of the Medes, captured the city, and Belshazzar was slain. Other accounts say that Cyrus, the Persian, was the conqueror, and that he entered the city by turning the water of a river, which ran through Babylon, out of its channel, and then went under the walls or through some unguarded gate into the very heart of the immense city. If this exploit of Cyrus is the one mentioned in this story or not, it happened later, and was the means of great hope, and at last of great happiness, to the faithful Jews in exile. This we are to see now, as we turn back from these entertaining stories to sober history.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. Which of the three sentiments do you like best? Why? How does truth gain the victory? Did any one ever see it conquering error? Where does the battle take place? How do we know that it will always conquer? Has error ever conquered truth? For a time or forever?

2. Why should the Babylonian officers hate Daniel? Did you ever hear of other men given to lions? What else was done to the Christian martyrs? Have some men power over animals? How? Would God save a good man who fell among wild beasts?

3. What is sacrilege? How does God punish it in these days? How are men weighed in the balances? What becomes of them? What is the "judgment day"? Why was the capture of Babylon by Cyrus fortunate for the Jews?

LESSON XXII.

THE DAWN.

LESSON TEXT.— Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.— ISAIAH xl. 30, 31.

I. THE WATCHER.

Babylon was taken by Cyrus in 539 B.C. But before this the watchful eyes of a prophet had seen that the great city would fall. Who this seer was or even what was his name is not known. His words are joined to those of Isaiah, but they are the writing of another man in another generation. He may have had the same name, but he could not have been the same prophet. He is even grander in his style, and has an even more enthusiastic hope, since deliverance was nearer.

II. THE CRY ACROSS THE DESERT (ISAIAH xl.).

Between Jerusalem and Babylon stretched the Syrian desert. Over this wilderness the prophet represents a voice coming to those who wait and watch among the ruins of Jerusalem, telling them that the punishment of her sins is at an end, and bidding them prepare the way for the Lord to come with pardon. They must make a smooth and straight road for Him. They must fill up every valley, and level down every mountain and hill. The crooked must be made straight and the rough places plain.

A doubter answers out of his sad experience: "What shall I cry? All flesh is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth. Surely the people is grass." But the voice answers cheerily. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever." Then the voice bids the man who shall carry the tidings to the ruined city to get up on the high mountain, so that he may tell them as soon as possible, and not to be afraid to speak loudly. The Lord God is surely coming, with power, but with tenderness like that of a shepherd.

III. JEHOVAH'S MIGHT.

Then follows a splendid description of the power and realm of Jehovah. The ocean was measured out in the hollow of His hand, and He spanned the sky with His fingers. The nations are but as dust, and He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. He spreads out the heavens to make Him a tent. He calls all the stars by names, and so great is His might that not one fails to obey Him. This is He who is coming to bring the exiles back to their old home. As for the idols of the nations, they who worship them have made them! Every one of us ought to know this fortieth chapter by heart, the whole of it.

IV. THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH.

The faithful Jews whom we found the earlier Isaiah calling "the remnant" (Lesson XVI.) appear now as "my servant." In later days the expressions applied to this heart of the nation were applied to Jesus, and many of them seem very appropriate. But there is no reason to believe that the prophet so used them. In chapters xlii., lii., and liii. we find "my servant" described. He will not boast nor be violent, yet he will not rest or be discour-

aged till justice is done (xlii. 1–4). He is not fair to see. On the contrary, he seems insignificant and contemptible. He is despised and rejected of men. That is, because he has had to bear the punishment for the sins of those who lived before him, and for our sake who come after him. But he shall see the results of his sorrow and pain, and be satisfied.

V. The Anointed of Jehovah.

This is not, as we might expect, a Jewish king, but the heathen Cyrus, king of the Persians. If we remember that the Hebrew word for anointed is the same as that for Messiah, we see how enthusiastic the prophet is as to the service which the new master of Babylon is to do for the Jews. Jehovah has anointed him like a king of His own people, to do His will in the great pardon, and in the return which is so soon to come. Whatever needs to be done he shall do. Jehovah will go before him to make the way easy and to break down all obstacles. He does not know it, but he is fitted out and sent by Jehovah. "I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me." In fact, all that seems evil is from Him as well as what seems good. "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am Jehovah that doeth all these things."

VI. The Glory of the New Day.

Then follow two chapters of exultation (liv., lv.). God hid His face from Israel (that name comes back now upon the faithful remnant, and remains as a tender title) for a little while, but now He will never again be angry with it, any more than He will allow the flood of Noah to cover the earth again. The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but His kindness shall not depart from Israel. The fifty-fifth chapter is another that deserves to be learned by heart for its beautiful promises of joy and peace to the faithful, when the hills shall be glad and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

The promises were not fulfilled literally, and, when they were fulfilled, the poor Jews did not know it. But there was a more glorious outcome than they dreamed. Between promise and performance, however, lay dreary centuries of sorrow and hardship, which we must now consider.

Topics and Questions.

1. How did the second Isaiah know that deliverance was coming? What means had men of knowing what was going on in the world in those days? Look on the map for the desert between Judah and Babylon. How would men travel over it?

2. Does it seem strange that a number of men should be spoken of as one,—the servant of Jehovah? But do we not speak of whole nations so,—John Bull, Uncle Sam, etc.? Would they not act as one and have like characters? Does it seem strange that Cyrus should be called the "anointed of Jehovah"? Does not God often use savage or ambitious men to be His instruments? What verses do you like best of all you have read in the later Isaiah?

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LESSON XXIII.

THE RETURN.

(Ezra i.; iii. 8–13; vii., ix., x. Nehemiah ii., iv., viii.)

Lesson Text.— Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make level in the desert a highway for our God.— Isaiah xl. 3.

I. Who Came Back.

Of those who were carried away from Israel, the northern kingdom, in 721, we have no record of any returning. The Ten Tribes, of whom the best part had been exiled, melted into a mixed population which filled what were later called Samaria and Galilee. Of those who were taken from Judah in 597–586, only a minority came back. The rest either remained in Babylonia and Egypt or spread throughout the East.

II. Freedom to Return (Psalms lxxxv., cxxvi.).

When Cyrus, king of the Medes, captured Babylon in 539, he gave the Jews permission to return to their country. In 536 Zerubbabel led an expedition to Jerusalem. How desolate they must have found the place that was once so splendid! The temple was gone, the houses burned, the city walls broken down, and the fields, though some of the descendants of the poorer inhabitants must have been there, badly cultivated. They had almost to begin over again. But they went bravely to work. They set the old altar upright again, began sacrifices once more, and in the second year they laid the foundations of a new temple. The people shouted for joy to see them; but the old men, who remembered the temple which Solomon had built, wept to see how much smaller and poorer this had to be.

The tribes who lived around Jerusalem did their best to prevent the exiles from settling again, and accused them of trying to be independent of Cyrus. They succeeded in delaying the temple for a long time, but at last permission was given, and it was finished in the reign of Darius, 516 (Psalms cxviii., cxxxii.).

III. Ezra.

Nearly sixty years passed before we hear much more of the colony at Jerusalem. During that time things seem to have gone badly. The people were poor and in a hostile land. Their enthusiasm waned, they became slack in religious matters, intermarried much with the heathen or half-breed tribes about them, and appeared to be in danger of forgetting what they had come for. In 457, however, came one of the great men of Jewish history, Ezra, of priestly rank and descent, with a band of seventeen hundred men, besides women and children (chap. vii.), bringing money and provisions. He was much shocked at what he found, but set at work to mend it. He seems not to have been able to accomplish much, however, until, thirteen years later, another remarkable man came to his aid.

IV. Nehemiah.

This man, like Joseph and Daniel, stood high in the favor of his conquerors, and was a cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes. In 444 he obtained permission to go to his countrymen in Jerusalem,

and brought to Ezra the authority he needed to carry out his reforms and keep back his enemies. The struggle with them is told in Neh. vi. The two leaders called a meeting of all the people in the seventh month (viii.), which is known as "the Great Assembly," and read to them "the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel." The people wept when they heard the law which they had been disobeying, as King Josiah did when he heard the law of his day (2 Kings xxii.). But Ezra told them rather to rejoice because they had found the truth, for "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

V. The New Law.

The book which Ezra read to the people, like that which was "discovered" in the temple in King Josiah's day, was mainly new. It had been partly compiled from old laws, but was chiefly the working out of what the thoughtful Jews in Babylon had come to believe would please Jehovah. It was essentially the books now called the "Pentateuch," then not yet divided. Let us understand the purpose of this law.

The fall of Jerusalem was a terrible shock to the faith of the Jews. They believed that Jehovah would protect them from all harm. As He did not, they reasoned that He was angry for their unfaithfulness to Him. As they went into exile, they persuaded themselves that this was their punishment, and that, when it was over, they would prosper again. So, when Isaiah sang of their return, he said, "Cry unto Jerusalem that her warfare is accomplished, for she has received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins." But here they were, back from captivity; and yet they were poor and mocked by the people around them. What was the matter?

They came to the conclusion that they were not serving Jehovah rightly. Among other things they were mixing with the common humanity about them instead of keeping the "chosen people" separate. They determined to build a fence around themselves, to make a set of laws so stern and peculiar that the Jews should forever be divided from the rest of mankind. So they would be ready for the Messiah whenever he should come. The learned Jews in Babylon built this fence of law, Ezra and Nehemiah now set it up, and the people went inside of it at the Great Assembly, and vowed to remain there. Other laws were added later; but probably most of those now in our Pentateuch were declared by Ezra. Now began that narrow idea of religion and that anxious observance of days and ceremonies which seemed so pitiful to Jesus, and has made the name of Pharisee so odious. At the same time the law kept the Jewish nation together, prevented it from melting into the general world, and so saved the great truths which it guarded from being lost. (Read Psalm xix. 7-14; cxix. 9-16.)

Topics and Questions.

1. Did most of the Jews come back or stay in exile? Why should any stay? Do Americans ever love Europe so well that they never return? Why? Why do you think Cyrus was willing to let the Jews go?

2. Which was the greater man, Ezra or Nehemiah? How did Nehemiah help Ezra? What parts of the Law do you know? What does Pentateuch mean? Name the books? When was Deuteronomy found? What did Jesus say of the scribes and Pharisees in Matt. xxiii.? Was this true of them all? How did their religion differ from that of Jesus?

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LESSON XXIV.

THE NEW LAW. I. THE SABBATH.

LESSON TEXT.—The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.—MARK ii. 27.

I. HOW IT BEGAN.

The Sabbath was not a new holiday at this time, but it received a new meaning and a new importance. It was so old that when the Ten Commandments were written it was not known just what it celebrated. In Exodus xx. 11 it is said to commemorate the rest of God after the six days of creation. In Deuteronomy v. 15 it appears to remind the people of the time when they were slaves in Egypt and would have been glad of such a rest. Note that it was the last day of the week, not, like our Sunday, the first.

II. HOW IT WAS KEPT.

In either case it seems to have been at first simply a day of rest, such as the hard-working people of old needed. The word "holy" does not mean serious, but simply *set apart*, taken from common uses and dedicated to God. But religion in Israel was at first a very happy and enjoyable thing, and the Sabbath was the day snatched from toil and given to joy and feasting. People wore their best clothes, ate their best dinner, and had their best time. The only thing forbidden was work. There may have been some additional worship, but every day there was sacrifice in the Temple or at the local altars, so that public worship on the seventh day was not an exception, as it is with us. The day was humane, for man's practical good and for that of his servants and his beasts of burden.

III. THE SABBATH OF THE EXILES.

They could not sacrifice in Babylonia, for they had no temple and local altars had been forbidden by the Deuteronomic law. But they could keep the Sabbath, and they did so with the more zeal because so much else had been left behind. As we shall see, when the synagogues were founded, the exiles went to them to learn the law and hear it explained; but the chief use of the day was to mark off the Jews from the heathen, who held them captive. They laid more and more stress on this (Jer. xvii. 19–27; Ezek., xx. 12; Isa. lvi. 1–7; lviii. 13); and, when they made their new laws, they were very severe. The emphasis was still on abstaining from work, but the old joyousness was lost in the feeling that the nation had offended its God, and must be very careful about what was work or not work.

Hence came many very strange and sometimes ridiculous definitions of labor. Not only was no business done, but no fires were lighted and no food cooked. For a tailor to carry a needle, or a woman to wear a loose ribbon or (in the street) false hair, or an old man to wear false teeth which might fall out and have to be picked up and carried, was unlawful. The cattle must come to the trough and drink. Water must not be carried to them. (See also Matt. xii. 1–14; Mark ii. 23–28). These absurdities were not in the Law, but in the explanations made by the rabbis; but they came to be fully as important. See what Jesus said of these in Matthew v. 21–45; xv. 3–9. But the Law was

sometimes as bad (Num. xv. 32–36). How utterly all this changed the effect of the commandment, which was meant to be kindly and humane! It had become a burden itself instead of a rest. There were thirty-nine kinds of labor counted which a man might not do! Among them were tying or untying knots, writing or erasing writing.

Sometimes the Law was carried to a disastrous extreme. In the time of the Maccabees (I. Mac. ii.) the Jewish forces were attacked by their enemies on the Sabbath, and were slain because they refused to fight. So Jerusalem fell into the hands of Pompey.

Foolish as this seems, it shows a willingness to sacrifice for duty which is noble, and, as we saw in the last lesson, this fanatical devotion to the Law kept the Jews apart from the world, and made the nation the safe trustee of great religious truths.

IV. Jesus' Idea of the Sabbath.

Jesus had great good sense, and he saw how the idea of the Sabbath which his countrymen had was really contradicting and nullifying its original use. It was meant to help man, not to hinder him, and he should not make a burden of a day which ought to make him happier. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," he said; and in so saying he laid down the principle by which we should judge everything called sacred. It is truly sacred only so far as it is really helpful to man's best life. It was better to pluck corn than to hunger, and to lift the ox from the pit than to leave him to starve there. So, when Jesus was gone, it was found that all life had been consecrated by his spirit of love and trust, and the Sabbath seemed to lose its special meaning. Moreover, in the great hope that Jesus would soon come again to establish the kingdom of God, all such distinctions seemed to melt away (Acts ii. 41–47).

V. Paul's Idea (Romans xiv.; Galatians iv. 9; Colossians ii. 16)

Paul thought that Christ had set men free from the bondage of the Law, and indeed from any necessity of observing days and ceremonies as sacred in themselves. It is the use we make of anything that consecrates or desecrates it. Nevertheless, the practical value of setting apart special times for doing important things, especially things that must be done by many together, as public worship, brought Sunday instead of Saturday as the holy day. The first day of the week was chosen as the day on which Jesus was believed to have risen from the dead. How our Puritan forefathers made a Jewish legal Sabbath out of Sunday we all know.

Topics and Questions.

1. What was the most ancient idea of the Sabbath? That of the exile and of Ezra? That of Jesus? That of Paul? That of the Puritans?

2. How were you taught to observe Sunday? How would you observe it if you could? What would become of the church if there were no Sunday? Of religion? Can we make every day religious?

3. What is the value of Sunday to the laboring man? To the man of business? What kinds of labor are necessary on Sunday? How can we help in giving the working part of the world a rest? Would it, or not, be better to make every day's labor so easy and happy that we should need no complete rest and interruption? How does this bear on the question of vacation?

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LESSON XXV.

THE NEW LAW. II. THE PRIESTS.

(Exodus xxviii., xxix.; Numbers viii.; Leviticus viii., ix., xvi.; Hebrews viii., ix., x. 1–25.)

Lesson Text.—We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.—Hebrews iv. 15.

I. Prophets and Priests.

Before the captivity the Jews were led by the prophets, after it by the priests. This was not because the prophets had failed, but because they had succeeded. They tried to keep the people from worshipping any other gods than Jehovah (you remember how hard Elijah fought against Baal), and they accomplished their purpose. But, when the Jews had at last been brought to serve Jehovah alone, they felt that they had offended Him by not doing so always; and, as we have learned before, they became all the more anxious to serve Him exactly right now. In order to do this, they defined very closely what should be done, and then became very careful not to change the laws they had so made. The consequence was that they became very narrow and bigoted, and stopped learning anything new or larger. What was worse, they became so eager to do what the Law commanded, which was often something of not much real consequence, that they lost sight of that common goodness which is most important. As Jesus said to them, "Ye pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin [that is, you are careful to pay taxes on even your common garden herbs], and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, justice, mercy, and truth." This whole chapter, Matthew xxiii., is worth reading just here. Also Luke x. 23–37.

II. The Difference between Prophets and Priests.

So the very success of the prophets was their defeat. For a prophet is a man who sees new truth and who insists that goodness in common life is better than worship alone, though this is good so far as it leads to goodness. A priest is one who takes the truth already known, and expresses it in forms of worship. This is an important thing to do, and the priest is a valuable man. The trouble is that, when he has once put religion into forms of service, he becomes so fond of and so fixed in those forms that he never wishes to change them. So, though he begins as the helper of the prophet, he is apt to become in time his enemy; and, though he serves the truth by putting it into forms that can be used in worship, he may at last do it harm by holding on to these forms when the truth they express has been enlarged or set aside by thoughtful people. Moreover, as every man comes to think that the work he does is the best, the priest loves his forms so much and gets so used to them that he forgets that they are good only so far as they help people to be good, and even accepts them in place of goodness. So, when new prophets rose, the first people whom they have to attack or who attack them are apt to be the priests. So Jesus and the priests of his day were soon in strife, and at last they put him to death (Matt. xxiii. 29–39).

III. After the Exile.

When the second temple was built, the priest gained much in power. The more exact the Law, the more necessary was a trained set of officers. Before, any one could offer his sacrifice at the local altar, now, only the ordained priest, not even the Levites, who now were given lower and often menial duties. There were twenty thousand priests, serving in twenty-four courses or sets. They had to be whole and well men, to keep themselves very clean, to abstain from wine and from cutting hair or beard. They wore special garments. Their chief duty was to offer the daily sacrifices, making all the preparations therefor. At their head was the High Priest, who was also the practical head of the nation, since there were no kings. He was anointed like a king, and wore the purple and a crown.

IV. The Priests of To-day.

The Jews have no priests now, since they have no temple. The synagogue has taken its place, and the rabbis have taken theirs. But certain kinds of Christians have followed the ancient Jewish method, and have orders or classes of priests, specially ordained, and clothed, and given authority to officiate at public worship and to teach doctrine. The greatest example of this is the Roman Catholic Church, which has a pope, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, down to those who have charge of churches. These are looked upon as successors of Christ.

They are generally good men, and do fine service as teachers and controllers of those who are in their charge. The example of the Roman Church is followed by the Greek Church (as in Russia), by the Anglican in England, and by the Episcopal in this country, with some softening of authority in the two latter. What are called the Protestant churches do not believe in priests,—*i.e.*, men with power which other men do not have,—but in prophets or ministers,—*i.e.*, men whose power comes only from the truth which they teach and the character which they have. In this they believe that they follow the teaching and example of Jesus. The priest and the altar are often very helpful, but it is not through them alone that truth and power come.

Topics and Questions.

1. What is the difference between a prophet and a priest? How do they help each other? How may they hinder each other? Was Jesus a prophet or a priest? Who do you think follow him more closely?

2. Do you know any priests? Did you ever go into a Catholic Church during service? How was the priest dressed? Why did he wear special clothes? What is the advantage of having people believe in priestly authority? What the disadvantage? What lessons can you draw from history? What was the Reformation? Why did our fathers come over from England?

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LESSON XXVI.

THE NEW LAW. III. THE SACRIFICES.

(Leviticus ii.–vii.; Hebrews ix., x.)

LESSON TEXT.—The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.—PSALM li. 17.

I. THE USE OF SACRIFICES.

Almost every ancient religion included sacrifices. Their use was to please God by giving up to Him something that He would like to have. Usually, it was thought that God liked what man liked, and the very best of it. So when the weather was good, the crops and herds fruitful, or the war successful, the people made offerings of fruit, wine, animals, or anything else good for food, in token of gratitude. When things were not pleasant, the people inferred that God was angry with them, and offered these gifts to bring God back to good humor. Even the eldest son was sometimes slain on the altar (2 Kings iii. 27). So Jephthah's daughter (Judges xi. 29–40) and the trial of Abraham (Gen. xxii.).

II. SACRIFICES IN THE TEMPLE.

At first sacrifices were offered wherever an altar was set up. Whenever an ox or sheep was killed for food, part of it was sacrificed to Jehovah, and the rest was eaten with great rejoicing by the family. The abuses of this custom, especially the danger of sacrificing to other gods, led to the law of Deuteronomy, restricting sacrifices to the Temple at Jerusalem. There they were offered in behalf of the whole nation, and were very impressive. Besides the twenty-four courses of priests, there were the same of Levites to assist, and of laymen to represent the nation. Every day the nation appeared in the persons of these men to thank Jehovah for blessings received or to beg Him for what were needed. On the great festivals and on the Sabbath the sacrifices were increased.

Within the Temple, lifted above the people, stood the Holy of Holies, a dark chamber into which no one entered except the High Priest, and he only once a year. There Jehovah dwelt, "in the high and holy place." Before it stood a great altar, on which the fire burned to consume the offering and the incense. Around the altar ran a terrace on which the priests walked as they attended to the sacrifice. An inclined plane led up to it, which was kept sprinkled with salt, so that the priests, who were barefooted, might not slip in the blood which was always running down it.

When the solemn moment came, the word of command was given, and the people below fell on their faces with outspread hands in silent prayer. The victims were slain, and the proper parts placed on the fires. Then the smoke arose in which the essence of the sacrifice was supposed to go up for Jehovah's acceptance, the priests chanted praises, the choirs sang, and the great orchestras accompanied them, while at every pause the priests blew their silver trumpets three times, and the people threw themselves down in adoration. The psalms (beginning with Sunday) were xxiv., xlviii., lxxxii., xciv., lxxxi., xciii., xcii. There were also smaller sacrifices by individuals for various occasions and causes.

III. The Opposition of the Prophets.

It is not strange that the people should come to believe that all that was needed to please Jehovah was some such sacrifice, and that, when they had offered it, they might do what they liked. The prophets, however, believed that Jehovah was served, not with sacrifices of bulls and goats, but with right living,—with justice, mercy, and humble walking with God. The most that they could say for the sacrifices was that they might serve as expressions of holy thoughts and good resolutions. They said some very strong things against them (Isa. i. 11–17; Micah vi. 6–8; Jer. vii. 21–28; Amos v. 21–27). But sacrifices continued to be offered even in the time of Jesus. He seems to have said nothing against the proper use of them, and probably was sometimes present at them. He told certain men to go and offer what was customary in their cases. But the emphasis which he laid upon the good life, love, and trust, led his disciples to give them up.

IV. The Sacrifice of Christ.

The death of Christ upon the cross has been commonly looked upon as the one great offering which has been accepted of God in place of continual sacrifices. In what way this sacrifice is to be understood Christians have differed very much. Some have thought that Christ, as the Son of God and himself divine, offered to his Father his infinite sufferings and his death to appease His wrath against the combined sins of all humanity, and that we, by having faith in this atoning sacrifice, receive the benefit of it. Others do not think that God would take part in so unjust a thing as to punish the innocent for the guilty, and to accept the guilty as innocent because an innocent person had suffered instead of them. This would not be allowed in a human court, and seems strange in the divine. Those who so think believe that the sacrifice of Christ was in his life, not his death alone, and that it was his obedience to God and his love of man which save us, so far as we imitate them in our own lives. The former idea, however, served as a sort of bridge over which those accustomed to think of sacrifice as involving blood and death could pass to a higher idea.

V. How We may Sacrifice.

The sacrifice which is possible to all of us lies in whatever we give up or refuse to receive for others' sake, in every self-denial that we make for the sake of what is higher in us, and in all devotion to that welfare of humanity which is the kingdom of God.

Topics and Questions.

1. For what were sacrifices made? What was sacrificed? What do you know of human sacrifices in Mexico in Cortes' time? Why did Abraham feel called upon to sacrifice his only son? Do you think sacrifices for the nation a beautiful idea? Why were the prophets opposed to sacrifices? Do you think they were right? When is religion in danger of injuring character?

2. How may we offer sacrifices to-day? How does a mother who encourages her son to go to a just war differ from the king who slew his son on the city walls? Ought Jephthah to have slain his daughter? Did he? Can a man sacrifice his health, his time, his prospects, his happiness, for another? What did our parents sacrifice for us? How much have we a right to demand of others?

References.

Encyclopædia Biblica, *Sacrifice*. Carpenter, "Life in Palestine," p. 105. Kent, "Babylonian Period," 239–251. Stanley, II., Lecture XXVII.

LESSON XXVII.

THE NEW LAW. IV. THE SYNAGOGUE.

(Luke iv. 16–37; Acts xiii., xviii.; Matthew vi. 1–18; Psalm cxix. 1–16, 97–112.)

Lesson Text.—He entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.—Luke iv. 16.

The word "synagogue," like the word "church," is used to signify both a body of people and a building. But, while its real meaning is a congregation, it is most commonly used of the house in which the congregation meets. Thus every large city in this country has several synagogues, or Jewish meeting-houses.

I. Origin.

The synagogue rose out of the circumstances of the Exile. Far from their temple, not allowed to build another, and separated in many settlements, the Jews were obliged to begin a new public religious life. In place of the sacrifices they took to fasting, which was a kind of a sacrifice, and needed no temple or altar. Then, as the Law began to be gathered or written, and as they began to believe that strict observance of it was necessary to get Jehovah's favor, they felt the need of studying it more closely. So they began to come together for this purpose, and out of these gatherings in each settlement grew the synagogues.

II. Differences from the Temple.

The Temple was a place of worship and sacrifice only. The synagogue came to have some prayers, but its real purpose was study and discussion of the Law, and there was nothing like sacrifice. Besides, in the Temple only priests could officiate, but in the synagogue any one who seemed capable might read the Law and expound it to the congregation. The only officers were "the ruler of the synagogue" (Luke viii. 41), or general superintendent, and the attendant, or minister (Luke iv. 20), who was a sort of sexton, or beadle, whose duty was to bring to the reader and put back into the ark or cabinet the scrolls which were to be read that day.

In Luke iv. 16–37 we have a clear picture of how the synagogue of Jesus' time was conducted. Jesus was in the habit of going to church every Sabbath (a good example for us all), and on this day he signified his desire to read; and the attendant brought him the roll (for there were no books then) of the prophet Isaiah. He turned to the passage, which may have been in the lesson for the day, read it, rolled up the scroll, gave it to the attendant and sat down to explain the passage. Apparently, as every one had the right to speak, so every one had the right to protest against any wrong interpretation. The congregation did not like what Jesus said, and proceeded to put him out, and even tried to kill him. But he went to another town, and spoke in the synagogue there.

III. The Order of Service.

There were five chief parts. First came a sort of confession of faith, "Hear, O Israel," etc., from Deut. vi. 4–9, xi. 13–21. (Num. xv. 37–41.) Then came some prayers, then a lesson from the Law,

or Pentateuch, then one from the Prophets; *i.e.*, not only what we call the prophets, but also the historical books. Then came an explanation of the two lessons, followed by a doxology. This any one at first might give, but at length it fell naturally into the hands of the rabbis, or educated teachers, and so continues to-day. There was also at first the singing of psalms (Psalm xxvi. 12), many of which seem to have been composed for this purpose, and prayer could be offered by any one in the congregation. So the individual was recognized as he never was before in Israel, and so religious life and interest were kept up in a far country

IV. Later History.

When the exiles went back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple, the synagogue may have dropped out of use for a time; but, as smaller towns were founded, the distance from the Temple was felt, and the synagogues took the place of those local sanctuaries which the prophets had destroyed. They kept the people religiously alive and true to the Law.

In the New Testament we hear much of the synagogues, though the grandest of the temples was in Jerusalem. When Christianity became a missionary religion under Paul and Peter, it was in the synagogues that they found opportunities to preach the new gospel. By that time the synagogues had come to have civil power also, especially when there were more Jews than Gentiles, and the Sanhedrin, or council, had the right to try criminals, and, if they were found guilty, to scourge, excommunicate, or even put to death, as by stoning.

V. Special Interest to Us.

The synagogue was probably the pattern on which the first Christian churches were moulded, and so is the parent of the local church of the Protestants, as the "Church" descended from the Temple, its priesthood, and its liturgy. Compare our order of service—prayer, reading, sermon, hymn, benediction—with that of the synagogue, and the independence of each assembly from every other, as well as its theory that the leader of the service is only a member of the congregation "separated" and perhaps educated for his office, and you see that the synagogue is the long-ago ancestor of the New England meeting-house.

Topics and Questions.

1. The origin of the synagogue. The reason for it. Differences from the Temple. Democratic idea of ministry and service. Was Jesus considered more than a good young man when he "stood up to read"? Why did they attack him? What powers over the life of Jesus had the synagogue? What was the order of service?

2. What relation is there between the synagogue and the New England meeting-house? Did the former influence the latter? Did the Puritans study the Old Testament much? What and whence was their idea of the theocracy? Whence the idea of the Cathedral and its grand liturgical service? Which would a free country be most likely to prefer, a priesthood or the independent minister?

References.

Carpenter, p. 111. Kent, "Babylonian Period," see Index. Encyclopædia Biblica, *Synagogue, Sanhedrin*. Stanley, III., Lecture L. Smith's (revised) and Hastings' Bible Dictionaries.

LESSON XXVIII.

NEW IDEAS.

Lesson Text.—He shall give his angels charge over thee . . . lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.—Luke iv. 10, 11.

Friendship Between the Jews and the Persians.

It was the Persians who, under Cyrus, conquered Babylon and set the Jews free. For that reason alone the Jews would have felt friendly toward them. But there were also many points of resemblance between the religious beliefs of the two nations. Both worshipped only one God, both had a pure moral code of laws, both made distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals, and believed in other causes of ceremonial defilement. The Persians also had something like the Jewish synagogue. So, it was not strange that Isaiah spoke of Cyrus as the anointed of God (Isaiah xlv. 1–7), and that the people of the prophet learned much new religion from the people of the great king.

I. Future Life and Judgment.

The greatest of the new ideas was that of judgment beyond the grave. The Jews had always believed in life after death, but it was a life not worth having, a dull wandering in a dim region under the earth, called Sheol. Two pictures especially illustrate this, that of the witch of Endor "disquieting" Samuel to bring him up to Saul (1 Samuel xxviii. 3–20), and that of the shades mocking at the king of Babylon as he "became as one of" them (Isaiah xiv. 1–23). Job came very near a better belief (xiv. 12–15), Daniel distinctly affirmed it (xii. 1–3), Ecclesiastes distinctly denied it (ix. 9, 10), but all these came later than the time we are considering. From now onward, however, the belief in a conscious future life, in which all men should reap what they had sown in this life, grew more common, till it was firmly fixed in the hearts of the people. The Sadducees of Jesus' time denied it, since it was not taught in the law; but the Pharisees, with their large following among the multitude, held it as one of their chief doctrines. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus gave it fresh power; and, after a generation, the idea that Jesus would come again to establish his kingdom on earth, gave way to that which still is the common one,—that life hereafter will be spent, not on earth, but in heaven or in hell.

II. Angels, Good and Evil.

The belief in angels, especially as messengers (which is the meaning of the word) from God to man, was very common among the Israelites in all times; and they shared the belief held throughout the East, in evil spirits all about them trying to play tricks upon them. But these ideas were much strengthened by contact with the Persians, who believed in a host of such beings. Ormuzd, the spirit of good, and Ahriman, the spirit of evil, were fighting for the possession of the world, and behind them were ranged great armies of inferior spirits, graded in many ranks. Gabriel (Daniel viii. 15, 16) came to interpret Daniel's vision, and Michael is the guardian angel of Israel (Daniel x. 13). In Zechariah i.–v. much is said of angels. There is an evil angel, Asmodeus, in a later Jewish book, who came directly from the Persian system.

The evil spirits were believed to be especially active within men. When any one had a nervous disease, epilepsy, palsy, insanity of either the dumb or the furious kind, he was said to be "possessed by a demon," or devil. We find in the New Testament very many cases of this kind, and Jesus seems to have had great power over them (Luke iv. 40, 41; xi. 14–26). Others had strange signs or incantations which they believed to have effect in such matters.

III. Satan.

It is now that the belief in a "personal devil" became active, which has played so great a part in Christian doctrine. Something like him is found in the "lying spirit" of 1 Kings xxii. 19–23. The first time that he bears the name of Satan is in Zechariah (iii. 1), about the time of Ezra. He is very prominent in the story of Job (i. ii.). In the New Testament we find him often mentioned.

IV. The Story of Tobit.

The popular belief in good and evil spirits is well illustrated in the story of Tobit, which was written perhaps about 150 B.C., and may be found in the Apocrypha.

Tobit was a man of Israel, who was carried captive to Nineveh. There a strange accident made him blind. He wished to die, but remembered that he had left a sum of money with a kinsman in Media, and sent his son Tobias to get it. Now in Ecbatana, a city of Media, dwelt Raguel, a kinsman of Tobit, who had a daughter Sara, who was persecuted by Asmodeus, the evil spirit. She had been married seven times; but Asmodeus had strangled each of the husbands immediately after their marriage, so that it appeared as if Sara had done it herself.

But the prayers of Tobit prevailed with God; and He sent the great angel Raphael to guard Tobias, to bind Asmodeus, and to bring about a marriage between Tobias and Sara. Raphael presented himself to the blind Tobit as a certain friend of his, and, with Tobias, went on the journey. By his instruction Tobias caught a fish, and took out the liver and the gall for magical purposes. He managed that they should lodge with Raguel, that the young man should fall in love with Sara, and, despite all that Raguel could say, should marry her. The smell of the burnt liver drove Asmodeus to Egypt, where he was bound by Raphael, so that the grave which poor Raguel dug for his son-in-law was not needed. The money was secured. The blind father came out to meet his returning son, who promptly rubbed the gall upon his eyes, so that he saw again. Raphael made himself known, and gave some good advice. The old man wept and said, "Blessed art Thou, O God, and blessed are all Thine holy angels."

Topics and Questions.

1. Why were the Jews friendly toward the Persians? Do nations often borrow religious ideas from each other? What nation gave us Christianity? What did Disraeli mean when he said that half of Christendom worshipped a Jew and the other half a Jewess? What ideas came from the Persians? Do we still believe in angels? In demons? Why? Did you ever see one? Is there a Satan? What is meant by "a personal devil"? Why should God allow any evil to exist?

2. Do you believe in a future life? Where? Will it ever end? What are Spiritualists? Will there be a Day of Judgment, or is this a parable of the judgment always happening? How are we rewarded or punished? How does Christ come again?

References.

Toy, "Religion of Israel," Lesson XV. Kent, "Babylonian Period," 252–267. Toy (very valuable), "Judaism and Christianity," Ch. VII. Stanley, II., Lecture XLV. Cheyne, "Jewish Religious Life after the Exile." Enc. Bib., *Angel, Eschatology*.

LESSON XXIX.

HERESIES. I. AGNOSTICISM.

(The Book of Job.)

LESSON TEXT.—Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.—JOB xxviii. 28.

I. THE POPULAR TRUTH.

The theory of the Jews about the calamities that had fallen upon them was that they were the punishment of their disobedience to Jehovah. If they became faithful again, they would be happy again. Therefore they applied themselves to obey the law very strictly.

II. AN EXPERIMENT.

For a time this seemed to work well. Great numbers of Jews kept coming back from exile, and the new state flourished. It was still, however, under the rule of Persia. Ochus, called Artaxerxes III., came to the throne in 358 B.C., and was defeated by the Egyptians in 350. This seemed to the Syrians and Phœnicians a good chance to throw off the Persian yoke, and they rebelled. The Jews joined them, by the advice of the prophet Joel (iii. 9, 10). But Ochus raised another army, conquered the rebels, and took barbarous vengeance. Jerusalem and the temple were almost destroyed, and—which seemed worse—defiled with dead bodies, while the synagogues of the land were all burned to the ground (see Psalms lxxiv., lxxix.). Many people were killed or carried away captive.

III. A GREAT BOOK.

This was a great shock to the faith of the Jews. How should they explain this calamity? They had been obedient, and yet Jehovah had not protected them. It is now that the Book of Job was written, it is not known by whom. The author takes a man famous in Hebrew tradition for his righteousness (Ezekiel xiv. 14), and on his story founds a new theory about God's dealings with man.

IV. THE FACTS STATED (Job i.; ii.; xlii. 7-17).

Now here is a man, says the writer, whom we all know to have obeyed God entirely. Job, in the land of Uz, south of Palestine in Edom, was perfect and upright. He had a lovely family, was very rich, and very scrupulous in his piety. But Satan, who seems to have been on friendly terms with the Lord, asked Him then, pray why should not a man be good and pious so long as he is so prosperous. Very well, answered the Lord, put him to the test. Take away all he has, but do not touch his life. So Satan manages to have Job's children killed and all his property carried off. Job answered simply: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." So Satan comes to God again, and says that the test is not close enough. Touch his body, and he will curse God to His face. Very well, answers the Lord. Do what you like, only spare his life. So a dreadful ulcerous disease fell upon Job, covering his body, and itching, so that the poor man had to scrape the sores with a piece of broken pottery. This was too much for his wife's faith, and she advised him to curse God and die. But Job answered that

we must take life as it comes. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

V. The Miserable Comforters.

Now come upon the scene three friends of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who represent the popular doctrine. They argue that, since misfortune comes only as the punishment of sin, he must have sinned, and had better confess it. Job denies this (especially in xxix.), and the debate grows hot and long. In chapter xxxii. a young man named Elihu joins in, and discourses at great length to the same purpose.

VI. The Answer of the Almighty.

Then, before Job could reply to Elihu, the Lord speaks. His argument is that man simply cannot understand, or hope to understand, the Almighty. To prove this He puts a series of questions that He thinks to be unanswerable,—where man was at the creation, when the stars sang and the angels shouted for joy at the glorious spectacle, when the foundations of the earth were laid and the sea was shut into its place? Whether man knows where the snow and hail are laid up or how the light is parted; whence comes the rain, the dew, and the frost; or whether he can bind the Pleiades or loose Orion? Then comes the procession of wonderful animals,—the unicorn and the horse, so terrible to the Jews. Job is terrified. He promises to say no more. The Almighty adds wonders, the behemoth (hippopotamus?) and the leviathan (crocodile?). Job is utterly crushed, and confesses that he knows nothing, and has no right to judge. Then the Lord turns upon the three friends (it is suspected by some that Elihu was inserted by a later hand), and indorses what Job had said of his innocence. Let Job pray for them, lest He deal with them after their folly. The humbled advisers do as they are bid, and disappear from the scene.

VII. All Ends Well.

The test being over and the argument made, justice is done to Job, who has been the subject of the cruel experiment. The Lord gave him twice as much property as before. His relatives came around him again, and new children are born to him. His three daughters were the fairest in the land. So at last the much-tried man, having lived to see his great-grandchildren, died, "being old and full of days."

This view of God's dealings is what is called agnosticism to-day; that is, the belief that we cannot understand God, and would better not speak too confidently about Him. It was, however, a religious agnosticism, inclined rather to reverence and faith, as well as submission, than to denial, believing that all is just and loving, though beyond our power to comprehend.

The Book of Job is one of the great books of the world. See especially chapters iii., xi., xxviii., xxxviii.

Topics and Questions.

1. What did the Jews believe to be the cause of calamity? Do we still believe so? Do we not say, "What have I done that I should suffer so?" or "Why should the useful die and the useless live?" Can we learn from all misfortunes? Are there any that we cannot explain? If we can make ourselves wiser or better through them, are they not explained?

2. What new light on the meaning of misfortune comes from the belief in a future life? May this world educate for a higher one, as one school does for another? What kind of good ought we to try most to get? What is laying up treasures in heaven? Ought the good to expect reward in money or comfort? What did Jesus mean when he said (Matt. vi. 1-21) "They have received their reward"?

References.

Toy, "Religion of Israel," XIX. Kent, "Babylonian Period," XIV. "Bible for Learners," Book IV., Ch. XIV. Driver, "Introduction," 384-409. Noyes, "Translation and Notes."

LESSON XXX.

HERESIES. II. LIBERALISM.

(Jonah. The Book of Ruth.)

Lesson Text.—Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness."—Jonah iv. 2.

I. The Popular Belief.

The accepted view since the time of Ezra (Ezra x.) had been that Jehovah was the god of the Jews only. For them only were the law and the promises. Hence all intermarriage with other nations had been prohibited, and the Jews settled down to the narrow belief that they only were of any account to Jehovah.

II. Heresy.

There were those, however,—though they were probably few,—who could not believe that God did not care what became of the vast majority of His children. Among these were the authors of two beautiful books, Ruth and Jonah. The Book of Ruth was considered in the "Early Old Testament Narratives." It makes its point very ingeniously by representing Ruth, a Moabite woman, as the great-great-grandmother of David, the most beloved king of Israel. Jonah is in the main one of the most lovely books ever written, though marred by the introduction of a repulsive incident, that of the "great fish." It is a forerunner of the broad and loving gospel of Jesus.

III. The Story.

There was a certain prophet (who is mentioned also in 2 Kings xiv. 25) named Jonah, whom Jehovah commanded to go and warn the great city of Nineveh of the consequences of its sins. But Nineveh was a heathen city, and Jonah did not wish to have anything to do with it. So, to get out of reach of Jehovah, according to the views of that day, which assigned a god to each nation, he took passage in a ship bound for Tarshish, in Spain. But the Lord sent a violent storm, and the sailors cast lots to see who was the object of this evident anger of some god. The lot fell upon Jonah; and he, confessing his sin, told them to throw him overboard. They did so, and the sea became calm. Jonah, however, had a strange adventure. The Lord prepared a great fish, which swallowed him and kept him three days and three nights, during which time he sang a psalm of thanksgiving for his rescue. The great fish then threw him up, and he landed on the dry shore.

Jehovah then commanded him a second time to give the message to Nineveh. This time he dared not disobey; but he made his message as short and severe as he could, with no hope of pardon. The great city repented, from the king to the last inhabitant. Proclamation was made that both man and beast should fast and wear mourning. God was touched by this, and pardoned them. But Jonah was very angry. He did not wish to have these heathens saved. He went out on a hill to see what would become of the city. To shade him, God made a castor-oil plant, with its large leaves, to grow over the arbor which he had built, and Jonah was very glad to have it. But the next day God made a worm to kill the plant; and it withered, leaving Jonah exposed to the hot sun and very angry at the death of the handsome growth.

Then the Lord brings out the lesson which the writer meant his little book to teach. "Thou hadst pity upon the plant, a mere thing of a night, for which you were not responsible, and yet you would have me destroy Nineveh with all its people, among whom are six score thousand innocent and ignorant children, to say nothing of the cattle who could not have sinned."

IV. The Miracle.

Almost every one who thinks of this book at all thinks first of "the whale," and generally appears to know of nothing else in the story. Now it is not said that it is a whale, but "a great fish," and that God "prepared" it especially for this purpose. All the ingenuity and research, therefore, which have been spent on trying to find a fish large enough to swallow a man have been wasted. Those who do not wish to believe in the miracle have tried to make the story a parable of the Jewish nation being swallowed by Babylon for its refusal to obey Jehovah, kept for a while in captivity, and then sent back to obey a second command. Some support has been gained from the figure used in Isaiah xxvii. 1 and Jeremiah li. 34, 44, 45. Another theory is that the story grew out of the old psalm quoted in Jonah, which uses the expressions "out of the belly of hell cried I" and "cast me into the deep," and seems to have been written by one who had been in danger in the bottom of the sea. The psalm could hardly have been used by Jonah while he was in the fish, since it is the thanksgiving of one who has been already saved, probably from shipwreck (verses 3, 5, 6). The story might easily have arisen from the psalm, however, as any one familiar with the Hebrew ways of interpreting such things will understand.

V. The Real Purpose of the Book.

This strange fish-story has drawn off attention from the beautiful lesson which this little book meant to teach, the lesson which was learned so long after by the Apostle Peter who had thought that the new message of God, like the old, was intended only for Jews. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him" (Acts x. 34, 35). The Apostle Paul, also, who carried Christianity out of the narrow limits of Judaism into the life of the world, has in Jonah a prophet after his own heart.

Topics and Questions.

1. What did the Jews believe about their relation to God? On what was this founded (Gen. xii. 1-3)? What was to become of all the other nations? Is it common for nations to believe themselves the favorites of of the Almighty? Is not that the reason why each prays for success in battle?

2. What is the Christian idea? What did Jesus say about this (Luke xiii. 25-30)? How did Peter learn it (Acts x.)? How did Paul (Acts xiii. 44-52, Galatians iii. 6-9)? What is the belief that makes missionaries? Can we believe that any are lost who never heard the gospel? Did any one ever believe this? Was the author of the book of Jonah wiser, then, than many Christians? What is Liberal Christianity?

References.

Toy, "Religion of Israel," p. 95. Kent, "Babylonian Period," 116, 117, 263-266. Cornill, 169-173. Driver, 300-305, "Bible for Learners," Book IV., Ch. XIX. Stanley, Lecture II., 388-395.

LESSON XXXI.

HERESIES. III. PESSIMISM.

(Ecclesiastes).

LESSON TEXT.—He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.—MATTHEW x. 39.

The accepted faith of the Jews was very hopeful. It taught that, if only they obeyed the law, Jehovah would give them prosperity. The Book of Job differed from this in asserting that we could know nothing about God's ways. The little story of Jonah differed in claiming that God was the father not merely of the Jews, but of all mankind, and that whoever repented, Jew or Gentile, would be taken back into favor. But there was a darker idea yet to be set forth, that nothing was of much use in this world, that, whatever we do, we shall be disappointed; and that the only thing worth doing was to try to have as good a time as we can while we have life. We cannot be sure of happiness even then, but nothing else was worth trying. Of course such a gloomy belief as this would put an end even to keeping the law, and so was a heresy.

I. THE DESPAIR OF JUDAH.

Such a philosophy of despair must have come out of repeated disappointments and a feeling that it was of no use to try any more. Such, to a large extent, must have been the common feeling among the Jews as generations passed away and their hopes were not fulfilled. The Persian rule, which grew harsher, gave way to the brutal conquest of the East by Alexander the Great; and, when he died, his generals divided his territory among themselves and ruled the subdued nations with severity. What wonder, then, that the despair of the people should find a representative in Ecclesiastes, "The Preacher," as he is wrongly translated. "Debater" would be better. The little book must have been written later than Job or Jonah, and probably after 200 B.C., when things looked very dark for the Jews.

II. THE PREACHER.

The writer represents himself as Solomon. That king had passed through so many experiences that he seemed a fit person to act as judge of life. He starts with the motto, which he repeats often (thirty-nine times), "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The word translated *vanity* means "a breath," "a vapor," something that comes and goes and leaves no trace behind: the preacher is tired of seeing the sun come up and go down again, the wind blowing now south and now north, the rivers running into the sea and evaporation carrying the water back to the hills, to come down as rivers again. There is no new thing under the sun.

III. HIS EXPERIENCE.

He tried to learn much wisdom, but found that he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. Then he turned to pleasure. Laughter seemed to him mere foolishness. He got himself a great estate, houses, farms, cattle, servants, till he had more than any one else. He had singers and players, but of all these he soon became tired.

IV. His Observation.

He looks out upon the world of business, where men are working hard for money, and he sees that the rich one gets no good out of what he gains except to count it. He cannot sleep for thinking of it and the way to get more. At last he dies, and knows no more. He cannot carry his money with him, and those to whom he leaves it may be fools who squander it. As to the laboring man, he is caught in the circle that governs all else. He works to get something to eat, and then eats to be able to work again. Then look at the oppression there is under the sun and the tears of its victims. They have no comforter, nor do the oppressors find any satisfaction.

V. No Hereafter.

Go to the house of mourning, and learn the end of all men and lay it to heart. For the same fate comes to men as to beasts. All go to the same place, all are of dust and turn to dust again. A living dog is better than a dead lion; for the living know that they will die, but the dead know not anything.

VI. As to God.

Ecclesiastes seems to believe in a God, but not one of much advantage to man. He is chiefly to be feared, as one whom we cannot understand and about whom we do not know just what He will do to us or for us. We had better be respectful to Him, especially in the Temple, but not say much about Him, lest we offend Him unawares. At last God will bring us to judgment, and all our works, good or evil. Therefore fear Him and keep His Commandments.

VII. What Then?

The real conclusion of the whole matter is not what Ecclesiastes states as such, but what he has several times said: that we had better be as happy as we can with what we have, put sorrow and care aside, eat our bread with joy and drink our wine with a merry heart. What ever we do, we had better get the most out of it, for there is nothing to be hoped for after death.

VIII. The Blues.

We know that this is not true, for men are happy and do get much out of life. Ecclesiastes represents a mood which we all have at times when we are tired or out of health or disappointed. Even Jesus, who passed through so many of the common experiences of human life had times when his "soul was exceeding sorrowful unto death." But he found joy and comfort in trusting God and in going about doing good to others.

Topics and Questions.

1. What is the common meaning of pessimism? Do people often think that they could have made a better world? Would you like to give them the chance? Are people happy who think much about happiness? Are the idle rich people happier than the laboring poor? Was Jesus unhappy as a rule? Do you believe that the sorrowful face which is given as his is a good likeness? Why do you think that he must have been happy? How do you believe that he felt when he went about doing good? What three things are sure to keep us happy? Shall we say work, love, and trust? Shall we add health to these? Think of those who seem to you to get a good time out of life, and of what seems to be the reason? Do you ever have "the blues," and what did you find to be good for them?

References.

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LESSON XXXII.

STORIES OF VENGEANCE.

LESSON TEXT.—Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.—ROMANS xii. 19.

OPPRESSION.

As we have seen, the Jews were glad to hear of the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians, and welcomed Cyrus as the "anointed" of Jehovah. But in time the Persians became tyrannical, and the Jews were not sorry when, in 331, Alexander the Great, with his Greeks, overcame them and took possession of the East. Experience, however, had made them distrustful of all foreigners, and they were scarcely surprised, though enraged, when Alexander's generals, after his death, divided the East between them and insulted the Chosen People past forgiveness. The Jews, as we have seen in the books of Daniel, Job, and Jonah, liked to express their feelings in the form of stories, and late in the Greek period, perhaps between 200 and 150 B.C., two tales appeared in which the Jewish thirst for vengeance found relief.

I. THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

The time is the reign of Xerxes, or Ahasuerus. The author is unknown. The story shows rather what was felt than what was done. One day, when the king had taken too much wine, he sent for his queen Vashti, that he might show the princes her beauty. She refused, and was deposed. Then word was sent through the kingdom to bring the most beautiful young women for the king to choose a new queen. The one chosen was Esther, a Jewess, and cousin to Mordecai, though her race was not known to the king.

But there was a man named Haman, who held very high office with the king and was angry with Mordecai because he would not bow down to him as he passed. He made the king believe that the Jews did not obey his laws, and ought to be destroyed. Mordecai heard of this, told Esther, and she invited the king and Haman to a banquet. Haman, sure of favor, had a gallows, fifty cubits high, set up, on which he meant to hang Mordecai. Meantime the king heard how Mordecai had once saved his life, and, when Haman came to ask permission to hang Mordecai, the king asked him what ought to be done to one whom he wished to honor. Haman, sure that he himself was meant, named great privileges. The king told him to go and do so to Mordecai.

At the banquet Esther begged the king for her life and the life of her people. The king was astonished and asked who had dared to plot against them. She then accused Haman, and he was hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai. And all over the kingdom the Jews rose against those who were to put them to death and had their fill of vengeance.

II. JUDITH (in the Apocrypha).

The scene is laid in Samaria during the invasion of Olophernes, or Holofernes, the general of Artaxerxes III., or Ochus, king of Persia about 350 B.C. The city of Bethulia was besieged so closely that the governors promised to surrender it in five days if no help came from God. But Judith, a beautiful widow of that city, called the governors to her and begged them not so to limit God,

but to hold out indefinitely, to which they replied that they must give up for want of water unless she would pray for rain. Then Judith said that she and her maid would undertake to deliver the city, only they must not ask how she was to do it.

That evening Judith, after praying to God,—"for Thy power standeth not in multitude, nor Thy might in strong men,"—put on her gayest clothing and her jewels, took her maid and provisions, and went out of the city gate, to the amazement of her people, and into the camp of Holofernes.

To him she said, after many compliments, that he was sure to take the city, because its people were about to be so impious as to eat food which had been sanctified and set apart for the priests. When they did that, God would forsake them and they would be an easy prey. She would therefore remain in his camp, and go down into the valley between the camps by night to pray. When God should tell her that the sin had been committed, she would let him know. This she did, refusing his sumptuous dinners and eating only what she had brought; but in the valley she bathed every night in a spring, that she might keep clean in these Gentile surroundings.

On the fourth day Holofernes became impatient that he could not have more of the company of this beautiful woman, and made a feast for her, to which he invited only his own servants besides. She and her maid came, but again she would eat only what her maid had prepared for her. But Holofernes "drank much more wine than he had drunk at any time in one day since he was born." In the evening, when all the servants had withdrawn and Holofernes was heavy with drink, Judith took his sword, cut off his head with two strokes, put it in the provision bag, went out as usual to the valley, and came to the gates of Bethulia. By Judith's advice the head was hung upon the city wall, a pretence of attack was made, the enemy ran to rouse their general, found him dead, and fled away. Then was there great joy in Israel, and, led by Judith and all the women dancing with garlands of olive, the men of Israel, their armor wreathed also with garlands, made a triumphal procession.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. Think over the course of history after the captivity. What changes of masters came in the East? What do you know of Alexander the Great? What generals succeeded him? Were the Jews a strong or a weak people, compared to the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks? Were they proud or meek, wise or foolish?

2. What do you think of the Book of Esther? Are you glad that Haman was hanged? Why do we like to have the good come out happy? Are they always so? Do you think that Judith had a right to lie to Holofernes? To kill him? What is right in war that is wrong in peace?

3. Ought we to love our enemies? Can we? Is every man capable of being good? Is good or evil at the bottom of our hearts? What can we do to make our enemy better? What other women have been brave in Hebrew history (Deborah, Jael, Jephthah's daughter)? What women in other history?

LESSON XXXIII.

WORLDLY WISDOM.

(The Book of Proverbs.)

Lesson Text.—Wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared unto it.—Proverbs viii. 11.

I. Practical Life.

We have read much about prophets and priests, and later about scribes and rabbis. But we must not think that all the people were as busy about religion as those persons were whose business it was to deal with it. On the contrary, most of the life of the Jews, as of ourselves, was spent in earning a living or in laying up and enjoying the results of labor. We have seen, in the lesson on the Exile, that the Jews in Babylonia became traders and started upon, or made great advance in, that talent for business which marks them to-day.

II. The Wise Men.

So sprang up a class of philosophers, or sages, who thought over life as it is and the rules by which it is best carried on, and put their knowledge of it into short sayings, or proverbs. Solomon especially was noted for his shrewdness, and, when these proverbs were gathered into a book, many of them were said to have come from him; but this is doubtful. They were probably from many unknown men, and were gathered into this book between 300 and 200 B.C.

III. Wisdom.

What is called wisdom in the Book of Proverbs is really the knowledge of life, how to make the most of it, and how to enjoy it. It is more hopeful than Ecclesiastes, as the views of practical men are apt to be more cheerful than those of men who are not in active life, but who sit one side and think about it. It professes to be religious in a general way, not by observing the law or resorting to religious exercises of any kind, but as referring life as it is to God and His management. There is not much reference to Him, however, at least in that part of the book which contains most of the proverbs, and there are whole chapters which concern only the life of trade or of common morality. In the opening chapters there is more mention of God, and chapter viii. is very fine and high; but, as a whole, the book is one of practical prudence, or shrewdness. As we read the sayings, we come upon many that have become very familiar to us, and it may be that they have had much influence upon our Yankee "smartness." Dr. Guthrie said that the shrewdness of the Scotch people was largely due to the fact that for a long time the Book of Proverbs was the reading-book of their schools. Dean Stanley said that the book "is the sign that the Bible does not despise common sense and discretion. It impresses upon us in the most forcible manner the value of intelligence and prudence and of a good education."

IV. Poetry.

As we shall see when we consider the Psalms, the Hebrews had no rhyme, but they had a sort of rhythm. Sometimes the proverb forms a couplet, as

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard,
Consider her ways, and be wise."

This was the common form. Sometimes it made a triplet, though rarely; and Professor Moulton, in the "Modern Reader's Bible," shows us more complicated arrangements. Perhaps you can find them for yourself.

V. SUBJECTS.

The proverbs deal with so many different sides of life that we cannot easily classify them, but some subjects are more often referred to than others.

1. *The value of industry.* As we might expect in so warm a climate, laziness seems to have been common, and "the sluggard" has much fun made of him. See vi. 6–9; x. 26; xiii. 4; xx. 4; xxvi. 13–16; xii. 27; xv. 19; xviii. 9; xix. 24; xxiv. 30–34.

2. *Temperance.* So much is said of drunkenness in the Old Testament that we have to correct our ideas in regard to lands where wine is abundant. The vineyards of Judah were everywhere. A famous passage is xxiii. 29–35. See also xx. 1; xxiii. 19–21. Another side is given in xxxi. 4–7.

3. *Cheerfulness* is often advised, and its good effect on health is stated. See xv. 13, 15, 30; xvii. 22; iii. 7, 8.

4. *Take reproof* well. ix. 7–9; xiii. 18; xv. 31, 32; xvii. 10.

5. *The rod* for children. xiii. 24; xix. 18; xxii. 15; xxiii. 13, 14; xxix. 15; xxx. 17.

6. *Woman.* A famous description of a capable woman is xxxi. 10–31. On the other hand, there is much sarcasm in xi. 22; xix. 13; xxi. 9, 19; xxvii. 15. Perhaps if women had written proverbs, they might have said similar things about men. But see xix. 22 and xi. 16.

7. *Shrewd observations.* xi. 24, 25; xiii. 7; xvi. 18; xvii. 3; xix. 4, 6; xx. 14; xxii. 24; xxvi. 17, 27; xxix. 21.

8. *The way of love.* xi. 13; xv. 1; xvii. 9; xix. 22; xxvi. 21, 22; xxvii. 9; xii. 25.

9. *Famous proverbs.* xxv. 11; xxvi. 7; xxvii. 17; xxviii. 1; xxx. 7–9; x. 15, 22; xiii. 15; xiv. 10, 34; xv. 17; xvi. 9, 18; xxiii. 5; xxvii. 1.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What is the proportion between business and religion in our time? Which increases the faster? Does a man serve the Lord by attending to his work? Does it require consecration to be successful in business? When did the Jews become interested in trade? Are they still interested?

2. Look through the Book of Proverbs and find which interests you most? What proverbs do you know which are not there? Do they tend to become rhythmical in form? "Waste not, want not." "Birds of a feather flock together." "He laughs best who laughs last."

3. What is the use of proverbs? Would they be of special advantage where there were no books? How do they arise? Are they found in all languages? Can you make a proverb out of what you have noticed in the world? Try it.

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LESSON XXXIV.

THE HYMN-BOOK OF THE TEMPLE.

(The Book of Psalms.)

Lesson Text.—I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart.—Psalm ix. 1.

I. The Hymn-book.

Every church to-day has its book of hymns and the Jews had theirs. It was not written all at once, but grew for five or six hundred years. If you will look at the book of your church, you will find hymns from Gregory the Great (about 600), from Saint Bernard (about 1200), from Luther (about 1500), from Wesley (1750), and from writers all through the last century; but the book itself was not gathered till a few years ago. The Book of Psalms was begun perhaps 700 B.C., and finished about 150. Most of them were late rather than early in this time. We have seen that some were written in exile, others about the time of the return, others when the Temple was dedicated, etc. There are five books to be traced, compiled at different times. Each closes with a doxology, the last psalm of all being the doxology of its book. These doxologies may be found at xli. 13; lxxii. 19; lxxxix. 52; cvi. 48. The titles were added later, and are not reliable. As none of the proverbs probably came from Solomon, so none of the psalms can be proved to have been written by David.

II. The Use of the Psalms.

They were probably written for use in the Temple service, and sung by choirs of Levites and women. They were accompanied by orchestras of instruments, timbrels (tambourines), cymbals, flutes, organs (Pan's pipes), trumpets, straight and curved, psalteries and harps, which were stringed instruments, and others. Some of them are not very well understood now. The choirs and orchestras were very large. They are said to have numbered thousands, though they did not all perform at once. The effect must have been very grand in that time, though we might not find the music so sweet or harmonious as that of our own choruses or orchestras. In fact, there was no harmony then, only octaves, and the melody must have been simple, like that of chants. In 2 Chron. v. we have a description of a grand special service in the Temple.

III. Rhythm.

As we saw in the case of the Proverbs, the Jews had no rhymes to their verses, but a sort of rhythm, like that of our blank verse, though not so regular. A couplet is a thought repeated in a little different form, or a thought with its opposite:

"Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous;
But the way of the wicked shall perish."

Here is a triplet:

"The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves."

Here are four lines in rhythm:

"For His anger endureth but a moment,
But His favor through life;
In the evening sorrow may be a guest,
But joy cometh in the morning."

IV. THE BEST PSALMS.

Taste will differ upon this question, but almost every one takes xxiii. for his favorite. Many love viii., xix., xxiv., lxxxiv., xc., and xci., ciii., civ., cxxi., and cxxxix. Some are interesting from the occasions on which they were written as cxxvi. and cxxxvii., which evidently were composed in captivity, as xxiv. seems to refer to the bringing of the ark of the covenant into the Temple. Some psalms have been adopted into rituals, as xcv., c., lxvii., ciii. In the Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches all the psalms are read or sung, being divided into groups for the days of the month. This arrangement is called the Psalter. Many of the verses, however, have no interest to us to-day, because the circumstances to which they apply are forever past. Such verses as cxxxvii. 8, 9, are contrary to the teachings of Christ, though we can understand how natural it was to feel what they express under the circumstances. All the psalms have been put into English verse for use in church to hymn tunes. Our fathers would have nothing else sung. Some of them (as in the old "Bay Psalm Book") were very quaint.

V. PSALMS USED BY JESUS.

The psalms were used so often that they were very familiar, and it is not strange that we find them quoted 137 times in the New Testament, and often by Jesus himself. Passages from them seem to have been as natural to him as his own thoughts. So, on the cross, it was Psalm xxii. 1 that he used when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46); and Psalm xxxi. 5 when he exclaimed at last, "Unto Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46). The "hymn" sung at the Last Supper (Matt. xxvi. 30) was Psalms cxv., cxviii., which were always sung at the Passover Feast.

VI. THE USE OF MUSIC AND POETRY.

They are the language of feeling (dance music, funeral marches, songs, hymns). The psalms expressed for the Jews whatever they were feeling at the time,—joy, sorrow, hatred, repentance, hope, despair. Take up any psalm, and you will soon find that the feeling that made it comes into you. The Jews often had no other way in which they dared express their feelings.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What is a psalm? What is a hymn? How do they differ from other poetry? What hymn-book does your church use? Can you repeat any hymns? Do you know the name of any hymn writer? What is the use of hymns in church? Do you like congregational or choir singing better?

2. What musical instrument do you have in your church? Do you ever have others? What others have ever been used? Did people always like organs? What instruments did our Pilgrim and Puritan ancestors use? What is the use of any? What did the Jews use? What does Paul say of church-music (1 Cor. xiv. 15; Ephesians v. 19)? See also Amos v. 21–24.

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LESSON XXXV.

THE MACCABEES.

LESSON TEXT.—With the God of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company.—1 MACCABEES iii. 18.

I. BACK TO HISTORY.

It is a long time since we have thought of the history of the Jews, because, after their return to Jerusalem, what they wrote has been so much more important than what they did. The Bible itself contains no history of the Jews between Ezra (444 B.C.) and the New Testament. In the Apocrypha, however, we have the two books of the Maccabees, in the first of which especially we have a story of heroism which is one of the most glorious in the annals of humanity, and shows that the spirit of the Jews had not been crushed by so long oppression.

II. THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION IN THE HOLY PLACES.

Antiochus IV. (Epiphanes, or the Illustrious), who became king of Syria in 175 B.C., made up his mind to have an end of the foolish prejudices of this little nation of Jews in regard to religious usages, and make them adopt his own. He plundered the Temple, built an altar to Zeus in it, and caused swine's flesh to be sacrificed there. The sacred vessels were carried away, an attempt was made to destroy the sacred books, and the observance of the Sabbath and other sacred days was forbidden. More than this, the Jews themselves were ordered, and in many cases compelled, to join in the desecration of their holy places.

III. COMFORTING BOOKS.

It was at this time that the stories of vengeance, Esther and Judith, which we have just read, appeared, and, more inspiring than they, the Book of Daniel. The stories which we have read in Lessons XX. and XXI. hinted at what would happen to the enemies of Jehovah, and the prophecies of the rest of the book kept alive the secret hope of the triumph of his people (chapters ii., vii.–xi.). The resurrection of the dead and their everlasting fates are first proclaimed in xii. 2, 3.

IV. REBELLION.

Some of the Jews not only submitted, but were glad to embrace an easier religion and have a more luxurious life after the Greek fashions. But many more fled to Egypt and other lands, or hid in the wilderness. In 2 Maccabees vi. 18–31; vii., are some horrible stories of the torture of others who openly resisted. The account of the heroism of the mother and her seven sons all should know. But the revolt came to a head in an aged priest by the name of Mattathias, who lived in the little village of Modin in Judea (1 Maccabees ii.). When one of the renegade Jews came to sacrifice wrongly upon the altar of Jehovah, the old man could not bear the sight, and rushed upon him and slew him, along with the king's commissioner. Then with his five sons and many others he fled into the mountains and began a guerilla warfare against the oppressor. A number of them were overtaken on the Sabbath day and, refusing to resist at all, were all slaughtered; but

after that, Mattathias, anticipating the good sense of Jesus, and assuming that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, decided that he would fight on that day whenever he was attacked.

V. The Hammerer.

When Mattathias died, one of his sons, Judas, took his place as leader. So well did he succeed, especially by the Napoleonic policy of attacking his enemies while they were divided, by repeated onsets, that he was surnamed Maccabæus, or the Hammerer. His name stands high in the list of those who have led forlorn hopes against mighty tyrants. The story is told with great spirit in 1 Maccabees iii.-v. After beating great forces in the country, he took Jerusalem, and, amid great rejoicings, cleansed and rededicated the Temple, and restored the worship of Jehovah, December, 165 B.C. Fortunately, also, the war had so exhausted the treasury of Antiochus that he made war upon the Parthians, hoping to refill his purse with plunder; but he was defeated and slain. In a battle with his successor, Demetrius, Judas was slain, 161 B.C.; but his spirit remained with his people, and for a hundred years they kept the independence he had won for them.

VI. The Hasmonean Dynasty.

Judas was succeeded as leader by his sons Jonathan and Simon. The latter became high priest and prince, so that at last the Jews had a ruler of their own race again. He was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus I., he by Aristobulus, who took the title of king. But now human ambitions ruined the great hope. The brother of Aristobulus, Alexander Jannæus, followed him, whose two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, after he died, fell out about the right of succession. Appeal was made to the Roman general, Pompey, who took Jerusalem by storm on a June Sabbath in 63 B.C. So to the Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks the Romans succeeded as captors of the Holy City. It was never really independent again.

VII. The Canon.

The authoritative list of the books of the Old Testament was not made till after this date, and was not finally settled till after the death of the Apostle Paul. It then included the Law, the Prophets (including the historical books), and the Writings or miscellaneous books, like Psalms, Job, Proverbs, etc.

Topics and Questions.

1. What power captured Jerusalem first? What power overcame the first conquerers? What was the first great invasion of Asia from Europe? How came our New Testament to be written in Greek? Was it good or ill for Christianity that one language came to be spoken in the Orient?

2. What other patriots have risen like Mattathias? Is there any resemblance between Modin and Lexington? Is "God always on the side of the strongest battalions," if that means the largest? Have the Jews proved themselves good fighters before or since? Recall the story of Gideon (Judges vii.). Have wars for religion been fiercer than others? Why?

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LESSON XXXVI.

THE DAYS OF HEROD THE KING.

(37–4 B.C.)

LESSON TEXT.—Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king.—ECCLESIASTES iv. 13.

I. IDUMEA.

South and south-west of the Dead Sea in the days when Israel came up from Egypt lay a wild country called Edom, whose people tried to stop the march of the Children of Israel, though the two tribes were related (Numbers xx. 14–21). The ill-will thus shown continued even when times had much changed and the name of the country had been refined into Idumea. Forty years before Pompey came, a native of this land, Antipater, had been made its governor, and now his son, with the same name, succeeded him, and became prime minister to King Hyrcanus. He secured the governorship of Galilee for his second son, Herod.

II. HEROD.

This is one of the most hated names in history, mainly, but not most deservedly, from what is said of Herod in the opening of the gospel history. He came of a fierce race, and his character was powerful, of violent passions, suspicious, ferocious in revenge, ambitious, and not hesitating to sacrifice persons or nation to attain his ends. He loved the luxury and splendor of the new civilization which had come with the Greeks and was fostered now by the Romans. He governed Galilee with vigor, extirpating powerful bands of robbers, and steered his course skilfully between the rival leaders at Rome till, when Octavian came into power, he was made king of Judea. He fought his way into Jerusalem, and strengthened his power by marrying Mariamne of the royal family.

His reign was magnificent, though he and the Jews distrusted each other. He made the country a worthy member of the Roman empire, with splendid cities, fitted with theatres, baths, and all the luxurious and noble architecture of the day, crowning all this with the building of a new temple. "A thousand wagons were built for carrying stone, ten thousand workmen were engaged in preparing material, and one thousand priests were taught to work as masons and carpenters, that no unpolluted hands might make the sacred courts unclean." Nine years and a half were spent in preparation and building, and during that time, says tradition, no rain fell except in the night, so that the sun always shone on the work.

III. A BLOODY REIGN.

Herod pitilessly put to death, for various reasons, all who remained of the royal family; and suspicions artfully implanted in his gloomy mind led him to put to death first his beautiful wife and then her two sons, whom he had hoped to leave as his successors, and other members of his own family. He died of a dreadful disease, leaving word that the chief men of Jerusalem were to be shut up in the hippodrome and massacred at the news of his death, so that there should be some mourning at his funeral,—a tender wish that failed, for they were released. It is not strange,

therefore, that it was so readily believed that he ordered all the boy-babies in and around Bethlehem to be killed, to be sure that the child over whom the star in the East stood should not grow up to be king (Matt. ii. 1–23).

IV. Parties and Institutions.

We have now passed through the Old Testament and the Apocrypha, and are on the threshold of the gospel record. All the names which are so familiar to us in the New Testament have long been so in Palestine. The old division into tribes has faded away, and we have Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and other new names instead. The sons of Herod are in power, Archelaus over Judea and Samaria, Herod Antipas over Galilee, and Philip over the east of Jordan. The sanhedrin at Jerusalem, with local sanhedrins elsewhere, ruled the Jews in religious and often in civil affairs. The Temple at Jerusalem for sacrifices and the synagogues everywhere for instruction in the law were in full action. The Pharisees, pious and popular people, intensely patriotic; the Sadducees, rich, aristocratic, and cultivated, but cold and inclined to the easy luxury of the Gentiles; the scribes, who took in charge the correctness of and often the instruction in the law; the Herodians, or partisans of the king and admirers of things foreign,—all were and had been for a long time domesticated in Jewish life. The expectation of the Messiah was keen.

V. Jesus.

Strange to say, the Messiah came not out of any of these parties, not even from Jerusalem, not even from a priestly family, but far to the north, in a country of the most mixed population and from a family of no prominence or sacredness in the eyes of the nation. As if God had tired of all the prejudice and pretences of those who called themselves His people, He seems to have made a new beginning, and brought Jesus before the world through the doors of a carpenter's shop in a little village in a province despised for the variety of its races. So only, it appears, could the Saviour of the world be born.

Topics and Questions.

1. Look at the map of Palestine in the time of Christ. Note the new divisions. Where is Idumea? Galilee? Judea? What kind of a man have you always thought Herod to be? What means "outheroding Herod"? How far do you think the common idea of Herod is just? What was the new civilization? How did it differ from the way the Jews preferred to live? Are people better or happier for fine architecture and many amusements?

2. Who were the Pharisees? Sadducees? Scribes? What did Jesus say of them (Matt. xxiii.)? What kind of men were the priests? How did Jesus differ from them? Was he the kind of Messiah they expected? What did they think of Nazareth (John i. 46)? Have great men often come from obscure places? How was Jesus a Saviour of men?

References.

Toy, "Religion of Israel," Lesson XXV. Riggs, "Maccabean and Roman Periods," 179–231. Stanley, Lecture L. Milman, II., Book XI. Hausrath, "Time of Jesus," I., 207–267. Josephus, Books XIII.–XVII.

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